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LAURA.

# WANTED A HUSBAND.

*A New Domestic Tale.*

BY ELIZABETH M. STEWART,

AUTHRESS OF "LORD DACRE OF GILSLAND," "LILIAS DAVEYANT,"  
"AUBREY CONYERS," "LONDON CITY TALES," &c.

"ORLANDO.—Can you remember any of the principal evils that he laid to the charge of women?"

"ROSALIND.—There were none principal; they were all like one another, as half-pence are; every one fault seeming monstrous, till his fellow fault came to match it!"

As You Like It.



(10)

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# WANTED A HUSBAND.

## CHAPTER I.

“ Then, being alone,  
Left and abandon'd of his velvet friends ;  
’Tis right, quoth he ; this misery doth part  
The flux of company.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

If hypocrisy be the homage which vice pays to virtue, virtue seldom fails so far to receive her due, in this polite and refined age. The advantages, however, which virtue derives from this sort of homage, are withal of a questionable nature. “ Civil words,” as we are informed by the worthy Daniel Dowlas, “ butter no parsnips ;” and a little more rough, old-fashioned dealing, would save an infinity of trouble and delay. We know not whether this class of similes and soft words, to conceal crafty thoughts and harsh deeds, originated with the sterner or the softer sex ; for, though dear mother Eve was first deluded by the serpent, we will by no means suppose that he tainted her with his cunning. There is, however, no denying that the average of women, lowly or gently born, highly educated or thoroughly illiterate, take, with a kind of natural amenity, to the deceits of modern society ; so that, of all feats in the world, there is none more difficult than to get from a woman a plain answer to a plain question.

Oh, for the days of our great-grandmothers, when, at any rate, if the main object of woman's life was, as it is now, to secure a husband, husbands were, at least, to be had, without the deceits, the petty intrigues, so derogatory to all that is really dignified and lovely in woman, which we now put in practice to win them! The result of the intrigue, too, after all, is but that which the poor ostrich attains when he thrusts his head in the sand, and thinks he has concealed his whole body. The elder son, the heir of an earldom, or the commoner of large estates, sees through the manœuvres of the intriguing mother of marriageable daughters, as readily as all who read it understand the design of poor Susan, the housemaid, when she advertises for a place where "a footman is kept." Oh! let the ladies speak to the matter at once, and advertise boldly, "WANTED A HUSBAND," stating age, beauty, accomplishments, and qualifications for a wife; the proceeding were somewhat less indelicate than to be paraded by mothers and aunts at soirées and balls; because the decency of an incognita would be preserved till a party was found to suit.

Yet, the poor women should, perhaps, not be too much blamed; for a good husband—a good one—is, after all, about as valuable a possession as this world can furnish. The woman who has such a husband is the most fortunate of her sex. The single woman of refinement and education, who has, with her own hands, to toil for her daily bread, is the most wretched—so desolate, so lonely—without solace in the present, without a hope in the future! What prospect is so hopeless as that of the poor girl, who looks forward to an old age, uncheered by the affection of a husband—by the love of a child? for, to what other affections can a woman look at the close of life? Her own parents will be in the grave, and the bonds of attachment between brothers and sisters, unhappily, but seldom last through life; and woe betide, in her folly, the brain-sick romancer, who calculates on the love of a nephew or a niece! that tie of relationship will neither satisfy her heart, nor be acknowledged as a

claim on theirs. Oh! in spite of all that can be said by Messieurs the Utilitarians, who have lately presented the world with various narratives of the delights of old maidenism, it is in reality, which is not utilitarian, a sufficiently wretched state. And thus, in common with many other maidens still young and fair, thought Emily Forester, as she sat wearily plying the needle, one wet winter evening, by the bed-side of her sick and widowed mother.

A cheerless and desolate old age is sad to contemplate; a joyless youth is bitter to endure. Emily Forester had her forebodings of such an old age, even in the experiences already furnished by such a youth. She was also a girl of more than average ability and penetration; and she knew, therefore, that the very miseries of the present would, unless the natural course of things were altered by a kind of miracle, fail not to ensure for her that yet more miserable future. Emily Forester, too, was one of those whom the arrows of adversity wound the more keenly through that sensibility, which, for a person doomed to struggle with this hard working-day world, is the greatest of all misfortunes, since it aggravates every one that can befall them. Truly, too, Emily Forester had needed to be more than commonly obtuse, to be insensible to the daily slights and humiliations of which she was the object; and if the keen edge of sensibility, and modest honourable pride, ever could be blunted, it might have been so in her case.

Poverty, abstractedly considered, is not so hard a thing for a free mind to endure; and Emily, by herself, would have consented to live in a literal cottage, on bread and salad; but it was to be cooped in a mean lodging, in a great town, with a fractious, sickly mother, and a brother of ten years of age, a child who was the only creature she could really love,—for whom she had not money to procure an education, and whose fine disposition, the contact he was forced into with coarse and vulgar children she feared would destroy. That contact, too, with persons whose every habit of thought and action



was different to hers, made for Emily the real sting of poverty.

The pain of her position, too, was increased by its contrast to the elegance and comfort she had once enjoyed; for, though her father had been but a poor lieutenant in the navy, and her mother the equally poor daughter of an artist, the lieutenant had a rich uncle, who was childless, and a widower, and who fancied in the little Emily a strong resemblance to a daughter whom he had lost, and took her to his noble mansion of Elmwood, in Wiltshire, where he engaged for her masters and governesses of all kinds, and educated her till she was sixteen, in the idea that she was to be the heiress of the wealth which he had acquired in India, among the last of those English adventurers of the school of Clive and Hastings, who accumulated almost regal fortunes upon the ruins of gorgeous and ill-fated India.

Sir Matthew Forester had, in truth, in spite of all the stringent regulations, managed to emulate pretty closely the extortions of those spoilers of the fairest land in the world; and, as he had been little scrupulous as to the mode in which he acquired his fortune, it was disposed of, perhaps by a kind of judgment, in a manner little less unjust; for unjust it truly was, after educating poor Emily in the belief that she was to be the heiress of his wealth, upon a mere caprice, and at the suggestion of an intriguing woman, to dismiss her, portionless, from his house, and, on his death-bed, to bequeath the whole of his fortune to that woman and her daughter, without even the most trifling bequest to show that he still held his once beloved adopted child in kindly remembrance.

The most bitter of foes are whilom friends or near relations, and the person at whose hands Emily sustained this irreparable wrong, was no other than the elder sister of her father, whom he, with an unwise generosity, had introduced to the notice of Sir Matthew, because she was poor and a widow. From the hour that his daughter was so shamefully and unjustly dismissed from Elmwood, Mr. Forester refused *to hold any intercourse* with his false sister; but though he

shut his door in the face of the avowed enemy, he unconsciously took a still more deadly, because a secret one, to his breast.

Mrs. Danby might, it would seem, have been content with the possession of the whole of her uncle's fortune; with seeing Emily reduced to the prospects of a teacher; and the certainty that, with only his poor pay as a lieutenant, Mr. Forester himself must suffer severe distress. She was not, however, by any means content; she hated her brother and his daughter much more bitterly for the injury she had inflicted on them, than they hated her from whom they had received it. It was not enough for her malice, to know that her brother and his family were in distress; she must enjoy the superior satisfaction of being an eye, or at least an ear-witness of their sufferings. The first point she could not attain during the life of her brother, who, on his death-bed even, obstinately refused to see her; but the last she attained through the medium of that other foe of the poor Foresters already mentioned, and who, like herself, stung through the medium of relationship, being a daughter of another sister of the lieutenant. Poor Mr. Forester might, indeed, have said, that but for his sisters he would never have known misfortune. Mrs. Danby had, by her own avarice and wicked intrigues, deprived his daughter of her promised fortune: Mrs. Barton, his younger sister, had, in her daughters, left a legacy of evil to him and his, which was to crown and perfect the great wrong they had sustained from Mrs. Danby, by the daily infliction of petty ones; for Julia Barton, the elder of two girls, removed a step from the poverty which oppressed the family of her uncle, by her father's thriving business as a print-seller, hated Emily Forester, because she was better born, better educated, and better-looking than herself, and equally hated her aunt Danby, and her daughter, for the possession of their ill-gotten wealth.

In the instance of the Bartons, no less than of Mrs. Danby there was a blackness of ingratitude in their conduct towards the Foresters; for their father was a man of low origin

brutal temper, in marrying whom, the sister of Mr. Forester had defied the advice of her friends, while she irreconcilably quarrelled with her parents; and her brother had been the only person to overlook her conduct, and receive her to his house. Poor Mrs. Barton, indeed, sustained the full penalty of an imprudent marriage, for the savage temper of her husband destroyed both her health and spirits, and she sunk into the grave at the early age of thirty-two; with her last breath imploring her brother to continue to her daughters that friendship and affection which he had uniformly shown towards herself. Mr. Forester was not the man to slight a request so made, and during the time that he was living in comfort, through the wealth of the capricious Sir Matthew, Julia and Caroline Barton constantly found in his house a refuge from the ill-humour of their father. The return made by the two girls for this kindness, was to become at once the spies and sycophants of their treacherous aunt Danby, to whom they communicated the most minute particulars of the distress of their uncle and his family. Mr. Forester obstinately refused to see Mrs. Danby, but he had no suspicion of the Bartons. Mrs. Forester, with a woman's quick perception of a woman's malice, was pretty well aware of the double part they played; but she wanted the proud, lofty spirit of her husband, and would even have been content to accept petty favours from Mrs. Danby herself. As for Emily, when once or twice she had ventured to resent the spite towards herself, which the Bartons were at little trouble to conceal, she was censured by both her parents for indulging what they feared was a captious and exacting temper.

The measure of Emily's mortifications and real distresses, however, did not fill to the brim till after the death of her father; when, with hypocritical solicitude, the infamous Mrs. Danby offered money to defray the expenses of that brother's funeral, whose end her treachery had hastened. Sorely against the will of Emily it was that Mrs. Forester accepted that assistance—still more to her grief and indignation, that her mother admitted Mrs. Danby to the house, to profane

with her presence and her crocodile tears the awful presence of death. Poor Mrs. Forester, however, was both a weak and worldly-minded woman, and was mean enough to accept petty ameliorations of her poverty from the hand of the very woman who had caused it. "Crumbs from the table of Dives," as Emily justly and indignantly called them. If this proud spirit of Emily was rebuked even by her mother, it may be well believed that it was yet more strongly censured by her common acquaintances, or so-called friends; for Mrs. Danby was rich and Emily was poor, and the world at large would fain have poverty, under all circumstances, succumb to wealth: indeed, if the world will allow that the poor have souls, it will not tolerate that they should say they are their own. Therefore it was that Emily soon found, that whatever were the bitterness of her feelings towards her aunt and cousins, she must conceal it, if she would escape insult from those who had, in fact, no business with the affair beyond their profound impressions in favour of all rich people.

Nearly a twelvemonth, meanwhile, had elapsed since the death of Mr. Forester, and the poor pension, which the rule of the service awarded to his wife, was very insufficient for the support of herself and her son and daughter; so Emily was obliged to eke out their pittance by giving lessons in drawing, and by the sale of small pictures in oil and water colours. Emily's great talent for the art of painting had been the subject of boundless flatteries in the days when she was the proposed heiress of Sir Matthew Forester, but, somehow, people lost their admiration of her talents after she became poor; and, after the hardest bargaining with print-sellers and small picture dealers, she could seldom procure more than a trifle above what the colours and other materials cost her; still, trifle even though this was, Emily and her mother found it of use in the terribly low state of their finances. Emily had also a remarkable skill in the delicate and feminine art of embroidery, and thereby added somewhat more to their narrow income.

On that dreary February evening, Emily was engaged, with a heavier heart than she had yet known, upon the embroidery

of a skirt of white crape. The pattern, a beautiful one of moss-roses, heart's-ease, and geranium, had been drawn by herself, and the work was executed in the most finished style. Nothing could be finer than the shading, more airy and delicate than the small sprays; yet, more than once Emily had dropped it with a sigh, or turned her head suddenly aside, lest the tears that dimmed her eyes should fall and tarnish the lustre of the silks. For three weary days, and with but a brief intermission for repose, had Emily worked at that robe. But it was not for weariness that she wept and sighed; no, it was over her own fallen fortunes, which compelled her to obtain a morsel of bread for her sick mother, by ministering to the vanities of the vile woman who had robbed her of her uncle's wealth, and destroyed for her the pleasant spring-time of existence; for that robe was destined for Miss Laura Danby, and Emily had been graciously presented, beforehand, with more money for the embroidery than she could have obtained at any shop in London. Munificent as this payment was, however, it was exhausted before the work was done, for embroidery pays but badly at the best, and Mrs. Forester was sick, and fretful, and exacting; and often, to soothe her sufferings and her peevish temper, the poor Emily worked at her drawing or her embroidery an extra hour, and thereby procured some delicacy for her mother, while she went without necessaries for herself.

The self-abandonment of Emily, however, did not carry her so far but that she felt alike mortified and indignant at being compelled, in this capacity, almost menial, to minister to the vanity of Laura Danby. Indeed, had the work been presented by the young lady herself, or by her mother, Emily would unhesitatingly have refused it: but it had been brought to her lodgings by Julia Barton, who did not, till after she had paid the money, say for whom the robe was intended; and then, though it was at the heart of Emily to refuse it, the sad and disappointed look of her sick mother checked her, and when she perceived with what relish that poor mother ate the boiled chicken which she next day procured for her out of the money, she censured herself for having, even for a moment,

thought of refusing the work. Nevertheless, as she sat in that mean apartment, and heard the infirm casement rattle to the driving of the wind and rain, and looked round at the scanty furniture, the faded hangings of the painted bedstead on which her mother lay, the half-dozen cane chairs, the worn Kidderminster carpet, the single table of old dark mahogany, and the little swing-glass, and contrasted that room, and that furniture, with the spacious chambers and costly appointments of Elmwood, she could not refrain from an inward murmur at her fate, or fail to feel that her cup of humiliation was indeed filled to the brim, when her industry and talents were made a market of by her cousins and her aunt.

Meanwhile, the invalid Mrs. Forester tossed uneasily on her couch, and Emily, as she held the single candle cautiously over her, perceived that the fever-spot on her cheek was increased; then, as she resumed her seat, and heard the rain and wind beating with added violence, she remembered that her little brother, whom she had sent to purchase a few articles of grocery in the neighbourhood, had been absent an unusual time. Emily tenderly loved this child, who was indeed worthy of her affection, for a sweeter-tempered or more intelligent creature could not live; and it was one of Emily's great grievances that she was compelled to send him out on errands, in executing which he was often insulted by the rough and vulgar children of the neighbourhood: hence she was always uneasy if his absence was prolonged. She now remembered that he had been absent more than an hour, and hastily putting aside the curtains, she looked out into the street. The rain fell in a determined London fashion, plashing in the gutter, driving against the casements, rushing in torrents from the water-spouts and the eaves of the houses. Emily remembered that her poor little Walter's shoes were much worn, but she apprehended for him no more serious evil, not even when, through the mist that covered the window, she perceived, by the light of a lamp below it, a crowd of persons, men and boys, with a few women, approaching the house. *There were but few people abroad on that wet night, and*

Emily immediately surmised that the crowd had been gathered by some accident ; yet she still apprehended no evil to the child, till she found they directed their steps to the door of the very house in which she lived ; then, with the most frightful terrors at her heart, she ran down stairs and opened the door. The first object she beheld was her darling brother, carried on a shutter by two policemen.

"Don't be frightened,—don't cry, dear Emily!" said the poor little fellow, as they bore him into the passage. "I have broken my arm, but it is not so very bad ; I shall soon get well."

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## CHAPTER II.

*"Manly.* These ladies, these ladies, John !—

*Moody.* Ay, measter ! I ha' seen a little of them, and I find that the best, when she's mended, won't ha' much goodness to spare."

PROVOKED HUSBAND.

THAT same dull wet evening that the accident happened to poor little Walter Forester, Mrs. Danby gave a grand entertainment at her house in Belgrave Square. The ostensible purpose of this entertainment was the celebration of her daughter Laura's twenty-first birthday ; the real one, to display her wealth and position in fashionable society to the young Earl of Alverston, whose estates, lying contiguous to the Elmwood property, Mrs. Danby had long fixed on as a most desirable match for her daughter. Mrs. Danby had, however, vainly attempted, while in the country, to establish an acquaintance with the Earl ; for, resident at Alverston was his only near female relation, a maiden aunt, the very stately Lady Barbara Vivian, who, being quite a lady of the old school, felt and expressed a profound contempt for all parvenues, and who, therefore, with the most dignified and polite rudeness in the world, had repulsed all Mrs. Danby's attempts to make acquaintanceship with her. Lady Barbara had her eyes open, too, upon the question of Mrs. Danby's ultimate designs. The

old maids are as sharp in matrimonial matters as the old wives can be, and since the Alverston estates were quite unembarrassed, Lady Barbara saw no reason why the blood of the Vivians should be contaminated by a mercenary marriage.

Laura Danby, however, was really what the world calls a fine girl, that is to say, tall and large-limbed, with bold high features and a florid complexion : upon these qualifications, her glass, her milliner, her waiting-maid, and more than one needy fortune-hunter had persuaded her that she was a beauty. With regard to her mother's designs respecting the Earl of Alverston, she was very willing to be a countess, especially when the Earl was young and handsome, and she was far too selfish and worldly-minded to suffer any modicum of heart which she possessed to interfere with so good a matrimonial speculation ; if her heart had directed her, she would not have thought of marrying the Earl.

The fashionable society of London is not very select in general ; nevertheless, there is a small class into which it is difficult to penetrate, who are not to be forced into contact by a splendid house and successful money-jobbing ; and of this class was the Earl of Alverston, and more especially his aunt. The haughty and rigid maiden lady was, however, safe away in the country, and, for mere sport, as well as with a view to accommodate a friend with that chance for the hand of the fair Laura which he was utterly indifferent to himself, the Earl had accepted the invitation to Mrs. Danby's select evening party. Very select and small it was ; Mrs. Danby was too good a manœuverer to invite a crowd of ladies, among whom, it was possible, there would be many with attractions superior to those of her daughter.

Mrs. Danby was not without judgment, too, in her way. To prevent any dullness in the evening, she had, at an enormous expense, engaged a few of the most celebrated Italian singers. " Music," as she observed, " is so good a cover for love-making." A contiguous apartment was elegantly prepared for a few quadrilles, and for the supper



there was every delicacy, in and out of season, at the highest price. "For young men," she said, "will not visit a second time at a house where they do not get a good supper."

At the very time, then, when Emily Forester was so wearily plying her needle, Mrs. Danby was parading the reception-rooms of her elegant mansion, and hugging herself at the contrast which those spacious apartments, with their rich furniture, their mirrors, and chandeliers, and wax-lights, and flowers, would present to the mean abode of the Foresters. Having finished her survey, she bent her steps to her daughter's dressing-room. Laura was sitting before the glass, ready dressed, but with a somewhat dissatisfied look on her rather handsome features; her waiting-maid stood beside her, with an air positively sulky, nor did she offer to quit the room till bidden to do so by Mrs. Danby.

"Really, Laura," then said the elder lady, "the impertinence of that girl Jane is insufferable; pray, what have you done to offend her now?"

"Oh, nothing, mamma!" answered Laura, with some confusion; "at least, that is, I would have red roses in my hair instead of white ones, and Jane would have it that white ones would look the best."

"Nonsense, child!" said Mrs. Danby; "white or red roses, what does it matter? your pale brown hair looks as well with one as the other. It is the assumption and impertinence of Jane that makes me angry with you. Why do you endure it? You change positions; she makes herself the mistress, and positively dictates to you. What can be the reason why you do not dismiss her?"

"Oh, mamma, I shall not do that!" replied Laura, petulantly tossing her head. "Poor Jane has a very bad temper, to be sure; but, then, you know her taste is so good; I am sure my dress is a credit to her to-night; and she has been about me so long, that I am sure I may bear with a few *cross words* from her, when you put up with so many

from that odious old housekeeper, Mrs. Harrison, at Elmwood. Talk of wonders, indeed! I am sure it is one to me, mamma, that you did not give her her *congé* directly after Sir Matthew died!"

These last words were uttered by Miss Danby with a slightly sneering tone, and with a hasty but sidelong look at her mother.

Something in the words, the look, or the tone, must have been unpleasant to Mrs. Danby, for she became pale through her rouge; and Laura observed that she turned away her head, and that her hand slightly trembled, as she affected to examine some of the trinkets on the toilet, as she replied—

"Well, after all, you are right, my dear. Jane has a good taste, with her bad temper; and I should not blame you, when I remember how much I put up with from Mrs. Harrison. But it is, as you say, disagreeable to dismiss old servants. However, my darling, you do look charmingly to-night; I must say that, in behalf of Jane, and her skill as a tirewoman."

The maternal vanity of Mrs. Danby did not exaggerate in behalf of her daughter; Laura had really never looked better. Nothing could be more becoming to her fair, but, perhaps, too florid complexion, than her dress of pale blue brocade, or more tasteful in its richness than the drapery of French blonde, looped with sapphires and diamonds. Laura's bracelets and necklace were of the same precious stones, and she had a finely-shaped throat, and beautifully rounded arms. Altogether, her appearance was such as to gratify her own and her mother's vanity, and to attract those, whose taste in beauty was not of the most refined cast, and who did not care for the intellectual, of which there certainly was not the slightest indication in the face of Laura Danby. To be an intriguante does not, however, require any powers of mind; cunning is but a coarse and common thing after all, and Mrs. Danby was as little sensible to delicacy in physical beauty as to the upright conduct of an honourable soul; therefore, she was perfectly

content with the measure of her daughter's charms, and considered that they ought fairly to have secured to her the coronet of a duchess.

Mrs. Danby was a very bad woman, with deeper guilt at her heart than even the known robbery of her niece, and that was bad enough; yet she was as devotedly attached to her daughter as the purest-minded and most honourable woman in the land. Indeed, without any disparagement to parental or family affections, it must be apparent to the most cursory observer, that the most extravagant demonstrations of this kind of affection are often made by the worst of characters. The canker of vice infects the whole moral system, and even the purest and best affections are perverted in the hearts of bad men and women, and become merely modes of indulging their selfishness, and incentives to crime. It is themselves that bad people love in their children, or even their brothers and sisters; they never consider the rule of right and wrong, and through right and wrong they will defend their relations, because they are so. This was the case with Mrs. Danby; but her daughter, as is also very frequently the case, perhaps by a kind of judgment, by no means returned this affection with equal sincerity; and so far as Mrs. Danby could be said to possess a heart, its severest wounds were inflicted by the daughter for whose sake she had been guilty of so much wrong. It was not that Laura designed the pain which she constantly inflicted on her mother; but she was intensely selfish, and constitutionally peevish. Beyond this, Laura had made some progress in the showy accomplishments of the day, and Mrs. Danby had received but an old-fashioned, plain education; hence, any remark which she ventured upon music or drawing in water-colours, or even the trifling needlework upon which fashionable young ladies waste so much time, was sure to be encountered with a sneer, while even her demonstrations of affection were not always kindly received. It was thus on the evening referred to: Mrs. Danby stood for a minute, gazing, with a most admiring air, upon her

daughter ; then she offered to embrace her, exclaiming in the fullness of her heart, " Ah ! my daughter, how beautiful you look ! How glad I am we have that foolish Caroline staying here ; what a foil she will be for you, the white negress ! "

" Ah, yes, mamma, that's all very true ! " answered Laura, " but do keep at a distance. Look now how you have rumbled my lace ! I do really wish you would try and learn a little of the *maintien* of fashionable life. These transports of your affection would become Bloomsbury Square indifferently well, but they are quite unsuited to Belgravia. "

The poor mother drew back, and turned aside her head to hide the tears which her daughter's unkindness had summoned to her eyes : she could not however so far control her voice but that it had some bitterness in its tone, as she said, " If I had been born in Belgravia, Laura, you would not perhaps been one of its residents yourself ; for, let me tell you, it is not amid the luxuries of fashionable life that a woman could learn to struggle with the world for a child's sake, as I have struggled with it for yours. "

" La ! mamma, there you are with your pretty stage speeches again, " said Laura. " Really I do think that your avocation was misunderstood, and that you should have been an actress ; there is a sad lack of talent at present on the English stage, and as your figure is rather of the majestic mould, who knows but that you might have rivalled Mrs. Siddons herself. As to these struggles with the world, which I am really sick of hearing you mention, I must tell you that my little wisdom has never yet discovered in what they consist. I believe you had enough to live on at my father's death, and it was not a great struggle with the world to live as comfortably as we did in the house of that dear old silly Sir Matthew, and persuade him to erase Emily Forester's name in his will, and insert mine in its stead. "

" You do not know that, Laura ; you do not know that, " answered Mrs. Danby. " You do not know how hard a task I had—how much it cost me, ere I secured that will, which has made you so rich an heiress at my death. "

"Ah, mamma," retorted Laura, with a malicious laugh, "I am now quite charmed with your candour. The will that makes me so rich an heiress at your death! With all your wonderful love for me, you took special care to keep the reins in your hands, and to have my uncle's fortune, in fact, at your disposal. Understand clearly, now, if you would really have me believe that you love me so much as you pretend to do, and that you have incurred all the obloquy of the world for your shameful usage by your brother's family on my account—which obloquy, by the bye, I do not believe you value a rush—you will forthwith make over to my disposal at least fifteen or twenty thousand pounds, out of the immense fortune which Sir Mathew left."

"But why should you wish this, my dear girl, why should you wish it?" said Mrs. Danby. "You can order what clothes and jewels you please, and I am sure I am not stingy with regard to your pocket-money. How ridiculous! What would you do with twenty thousand pounds, my darling? But be satisfied you shall have as much as that to spend upon whatever you please, so soon as all is settled for your marriage with the Earl of Alverston."

"So soon as it is settled? La! mamma, you do not know it will ever be settled at all!" answered Laura. "I am sure of this, that proud, stately, impertinent old maid, his aunt, Lady Barbara, will do all she can to prevent such a marriage, and Lord Alverston is very ridiculous about her. He positively told me one day, with the tears, real tears in his eyes, that she had been more than a mother to him, and that however he might be teased by her little odd, old-fashioned ways, he would upon no account seriously offend her, or act counter to her positive advice upon any affair of importance. I had really a great difficulty to forbear laughing in his face—laughing outright. But give me credit, mamma, I did forbear, because I do think, with you, that this Lord Alverston would be a tolerable match enough to make all the girls we know, and their old card-playing mothers, expire of envy; and beyond that, I should like to let the absurd old maid, Lady Barbara *herself*, find that she was outwitted; for depend upon it, for all

as proud and disinterested as she would seem, she has pretty good notions of her own interest."

"No doubt of it, my dear," said Mrs. Danby; "your discernment must be poor indeed, if it did not tell you that. Be assured, the object of Lady Barbara is to keep her nephew unmarried as long as she can. Of course it's tolerably pleasant, especially for so proud a woman, to be mistress of such an establishment as the Earl keeps up at Alverston Castle, and that post of honour Lady Barbara must resign so soon as her nephew marries."

"Oh, mamma! you calculating, worldly-minded woman!" said Laura, laughing, "you do not understand the ethereal nature of that excellent old lady. Why, the Earl himself has told me, and Jane has heard it a hundred times from the servants, that Lady Barbara would greatly prefer the solitude and simplicity of her own little cottage in the forest, to all the state and pomposity of Alverston."

"Lady Barbara can do so, my dear; and those can believe it who believe in the philosopher's stone, or the elixir of life, or any other absurdity," answered Mrs. Danby. "It is our part to decide from what people do, and not what they say; they say one thing and mean another. I do so myself!"

"Indeed, mamma, I suppose so," said Laura, laughing; "as, for instance, when you suffer Julia Barton so uninterruptedly to talk of her sister Caroline's beauty."

"Exactly so, my dear," returned Mrs. Danby, "because their preposterous conceit urges them to thrust Caroline forward in such a fashion, that they keep every pretty and modest girl in the room at a distance from every eligible man. Oh! the Bartons are very useful creatures; they will leave the Earl no choice between their ugliness and your beauty."

"For all that, mamma," returned Laura, now laughing, and in high good-humour, "Caroline is rather a dangerous rival, for she and Julia, to my certain knowledge, have persuaded Emily Forester that she is all but ugly; and if her good looks, which all the world, save Julia and Caroline, praise so much, *have failed in comparison with Caroline's, what can I expect for my poor share of beauty?*"

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"How can Emily be so foolish?" said Mrs. Danby. "She must know the Bartons are the laughing-stock of all their acquaintance."

At this moment the conversation between Mrs. Danby and her daughter was interrupted by a knock at the door, heralding the entrance of the very young ladies of whom they were talking. They were followed by the waiting-maid, Jane, who somewhat ostentatiously bore upon a silver salver a very dirty and crumpled-looking note, which she presented to Mrs. Danby, observing that the man by whom it had been brought was waiting for an answer, and had, indeed, desired to see Mrs. Danby herself. Mrs. Danby, though so lately taunted by her daughter with her lack of fashionable manners, had yet that delicacy of habits, that she was revolted by the sight of the offensive, vulgar-looking scroll that was offered to her, and hesitated for a moment to touch it.

"You had better look at it, my lady, I think," said Jane; "it was a horrid, low-looking man that brought it, and Johnson, the porter, would have turned him out for his impertinent way of saying he *would* see you; but the fellow braved him out, and said that it would be a sorry day for you, if ever a lackey in your house dared to lay a finger upon him; so then, Johnson thought it best to send up the letter, and a nice sort of thing it is for a lady to touch."

"Some beggar, or impostor, or wretch that is half mad, I suppose, Jane," said Mrs. Danby, as she took up the letter, and turned towards the lights on the dressing-table to read it.

While she was thus occupied, Laura was engaged, with the assistance of Jane, in pinning and draping afresh the lace which she considered her mother had disarranged; Caroline Barton, being a little the tallest of the two, was looking in the glass over her cousin's shoulder, and comparing her own face with Laura's, to her own satisfaction and the disadvantage of the latter; and Julia stood for a minute carelessly beside them, till, seeing her aunt fully occupied in reading her note, she snatched a scent-bottle from the toilet-table, and, stepping near to Mrs. Danby, dashed a portion of it

contents over the letter, saying at the same time, "For heaven's sake, my dear aunt, do take care; you don't know what horrid creatures have had that paper in their hands, perhaps some wretch with a fever; do put it down!"

The suddenness of Julia's action so startled her aunt, that she dropped the paper, which the young lady stooped to pick up. Mrs. Danby, however, snatched it from her, saying, "How fantastical you are, Julia! Pray, do not touch the paper if you are afraid of contagion; I must see the poor wretch who brought it. An old friend of your father's, my dear Laura, who was in business at Liverpool. I must see what can be done for him—he is in great distress."

With these words Mrs. Danby hurried out of the room, with the letter in her hand. Laura laughed, and said to her cousins, "Really, I think papa must have had some respectable acquaintances. If people are ever so poor, one would think they might get a clean sheet of paper to write to a lady, and an envelope to put it in. Mamma is so ridiculous with her charity! I am sure I would not have seen a man who presumed to send me such an epistle."

"Nor I, neither; but dear aunt is so good-natured!" said Caroline Barton, laughing. Her sister Julia laughed too—but her sharp eye, when she picked up the letter, had distinguished the signature attached to it.

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### CHAPTER III.

"Till all graces be in one woman, one woman  
Shall not come into my grace!"

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

ABOUT the same time that this scene took place in the splendid mansion of Mrs. Danby, a young man, whose distinguished and fashionable appearance neither the obscurity of the evening, nor the large mantle which was carelessly wrapped round him as a defence against the weather, could wholly disguise, issued from one of the mean houses in *Air Street*, and turned up Piccadilly. The gentleman in ques-



tion was one who had no reason to complain of fortune, unless it had been from very weariness at the superabundance of her good gifts; yet, he was muttering to himself in a strain of as dismal philosophy as could have been adopted by the most luckless wight in the world. Perhaps he really was wearied by the insipidity of his smiling destiny, and would have liked a good struggle for bare life, by way of excitement.

"Certainly!" mused the young man, in that *sotto voce* tone in which persons of strong feeling and imagination often unconsciously meditate—"certainly, Hamlet is right! the uses of this life are "weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable;" at least I find them so. Poor Trevelyan! his lot is very bitter, no doubt, but it has the solace of a real affection, and I know that he and that sweet Clara, that charming wife of his, with whom, had she not been his wife, I should have been half tempted to fall in love myself, will forget all the world and its malice to-night by their fireside, which, thank heaven, it has been in my power to cheer, by releasing them from a fear of their most odious duns, which ought, I suppose, if I were a good christian and philosopher, to be satisfaction enough for me. But friendship and charity are cold comforts, after all, for a fiery-tempered fellow such as I am. By Jove, I have a mind to turn misanthrope, only that Byron has staled that device for amusing one's-self, and I hate to take up with any fancy second-hand, as I flatter myself with being a genius of originality, so I must even think the matter over, and strike out some new path of distinction. I would give a cool twenty thousand now to be as selfish, and careless, and indifferent to the wretchedness of others, as Melville is. No, I would not, for he is confoundedly low in spirits at times, as much as I or any sentimentalist in the world can be!"

This young man was certainly a philosopher in some respects, for, as he thus mused on that raw winter night, he sauntered up Piccadilly in the drizzling rain, as slowly as though a midsummer moon had been sailing in a cloudless sky. So very leisurely was his pace, that it attracted the notice of more than one of the persons who hurried past him,

and who thought so slow a walk on such a night a strange fashion of amusement. Finally, a stronger scud of rain roused him from his abstraction, and, drawing his cloak down round him, he quickened his steps, muttering: "Ah! I had forgot! I have a legitimate source of annoyance to-night, in my own folly for accepting the invitation of that tuft-hunting old woman, Mrs. Danby. Heigho! I suppose that I must go, if only as cicerone for Melville, after the promise I made; but therein I offer myself a real sacrifice to friendship."

Hurrying on, in a less abstracted manner, as he concluded this soliloquy, the gentleman observed, a little in advance of him, a female of slight figure and lady-like appearance, attired in mourning garments. The hour, to his aristocratic ideas, was an unseemly one for a lady to traverse the streets alone; but he was not unaware how the distresses of the middle classes force the females of it abroad early and late. From the wife of his friend, Trevelyan, he had heard too much of what poor and educated females suffer; and there was something in the demeanour, the hurried step of this lady, that attracted his attention, even before pausing, as it were from very weariness and want of breath, she cast a timid glance behind her, and thus discovered, by the light of a lamp directly above her head, a very pale and lovely countenance; made, perhaps, more interesting, by a strong expression of anxiety and distress, the wandering, fearful glance of the large dark eyes, and the spasmodic pressure of the beautiful lips. The gentleman, who was indeed no other than that Earl of Alverston, upon whose promised visit Mrs. Danby had founded her matrimonial hopes, was more charmed by the momentary glance of that mournful, fair face, than ever he had been by the triumphant glow of prosperous beauty; nor was his interest in its possessor lessened, as, after that hasty, fearful glance, she again hurried forward, followed by a gentleman, who hastily and almost rudely jostled past, and, overtaking the young lady, stooped down and addressed her, apparently to her displeasure, as she neither raised her head nor accepted his proffered arm.

The interest which the appearance of the young lady had

excited in Lord Alverston was not lessened by the position in which she was placed, subjected apparently to rude molestations in the public streets; for it was evident by her manner, that whether the gentleman who addressed her was an acquaintance or a stranger, his attentions were not desired. The gentleman, however, still persisting in his molestations, the young lady again looked about her with frightened air, as if she would fain have claimed the protection of some of the passers-by. Alas! it is not in the streets of London, whose inhabitants are perhaps more discourteous than those of any other great city in Europe, that the young or friendless can meet with assistance or support. One gentleman, so self-called, burst into a coarse laugh, as he caught the beseeching glance of the young girl, and hurried on, by no means inclined to interfere with, what he called, the good sport of the coxcomb who followed her. A burley, matronly-looking woman, who might have been the wife of some petty tradesman, or perhaps a monthly nurse, passed at the same time, and looked back as she passed, and to her the young girl ventured to speak. "Dear madam," she said, "will you allow me to walk beside you, till we meet a policeman? This person, who calls himself a gentleman, is rudely annoying me."

The woman turned round, and staring full in the young girl's face, felt herself affronted by its beauty, for she herself was very ugly, and to an ugly woman no greater offence can be offered than the sight of a pretty one; so she replied with the stock insult of very low-bred and malignant women, and affected to believe that the poor girl was an unfortunate creature, who had no right to claim protection of any respectable person, and answered roughly, "Walk alongside me! Well, I admiresuch imperance. Keep your distance, you minx. I'd have you to know as I am a respectable married woman. Get out of the way with your feller; a precious wagabone he must be, to have anything to say to such a hussey."

The brutality of this insult overcame the spirits of the young lady, and she burst into tears, but her persecutor laughed, and again offered her his arm. At that moment,

however, they became embarrassed among the crowd of people collected round the conveyances stopping at the White Horse Cellar; in this crowd the young lady managed to elude the man who had so rudely molested her, and the Earl of Alverston, who had been about himself to interfere in her behalf, presently perceived her slender figure dart across the road, and proceed swiftly through the shadows that overhung the pathway beside the Green Park. The person who had acted a part so unworthy of a gentleman, now stood looking about him with an air of confusion and disappointment, that very much diverted the Earl, who now recognised in him a slight acquaintance, an exquisite of the first water, whom Lord Alverston had supposed to possess eyes for no beauty save his own. The beau, who, to complete his perfections, was a captain in the guards, had, it seemed, eyes for fair ladies, and pretty sharp ones too, for he presently caught sight of the young girl skimming through the darkness beside the park railing, and he immediately crossed over, followed by Lord Alverston, who very maliciously had resolved to interfere with his proceedings. Meanwhile, the rapid pace at which the poor girl had fled from her unwelcome gallant, together with previous excitement and fatigue encountered that evening, had so far exhausted her, that she was compelled to stop and lean against the railing for support. This allowed time for both gentlemen to overtake her; but the gay Captain was, as a military man ought to be, first of the storming party, and a real storm he seemed now disposed to make it, as, instead of offering his own arm to the young lady's acceptance, he took hold of hers, and in a voice in which real vexation and entreaty were blended, he said, "Charming Emily, how vain as well as cruel is this conduct! You cannot escape me; you shall not, though I pursue you to the world's end. See now, for the last three months you have vexatiously avoided me, and now my happy destiny furnishes an opportunity of again pleading that suit which you so mercilessly rejected."

"Captain Seymour!" answered the young girl, weeping,

"your conduct is unworthy both of an officer and a gentleman; you would not dare persecute me thus if I had a protector; your attentions are an insult."

"You make them so yourself, sweet Emily, with your preposterous and old-fashioned prejudices," answered the Captain. "And you complain of the want of a protector! Ah, Emily, why do you refuse to accept of my protection?"

"Let me go, sir," answered Emily, indignantly endeavouring to shake the grasp of the Captain from her arm. "There is law in the land even yet, which will interfere in behalf of one so poor and friendless as I am. Though a coarse and brutal woman insulted my appeal, I shall find protectors, if you compel me in the public street to call for them."

"You will not do that, Emily," answered the Captain with a sneer, "for you are full of that sensitive pride, which shrinks from a public exposure of domestic misfortunes; and if you were now silly enough to scream out, and collect a crowd, as a woman destitute of your refinement would be likely to do, who knows where the affair would end? probably in your name appearing in the newspapers, from the shame of which I know you would recoil."

"Oh, heaven!" exclaimed Emily, "is there no one to protect me from the insults of this man?"

"Yes, madam!" said the Earl, advancing, for he had heard both the unworthy taunts of Captain Seymour, and the despairing exclamation of Emily. "Yes, madam!" repeated the young nobleman, "there are, I trust, many to protect a lady from molestation in the public street, when a gentleman forgets himself so strangely as Captain Seymour has done."

"You are impertinent, sir!" said the Captain, harshly, turning to look at the person who spoke thus severely; "and since it appears that you are acquainted with my name, I must request to be favoured with yours."

"I believe, sir," replied the Earl, haughtily, and slightly raising his hat as he spoke, so that the light of a lamp discovered his features, "I believe that our slight acquaintance is mutual. At any rate, I have no desire to shrink from

any consequence that can ensue from my interference for the protection of this young lady."

"Oh, my lord!" replied the Captain, bowing with an air of half ironical respect, "though this sort of interference is not what one gentleman has altogether a right to expect from another, yet I beg to assure you that the young lady, despite her prudery, is not a person on whose account I should consider it worth while, by any means, to be at real ill-will with the Earl of Alverston. If this chivalric interposition be the prelude to an acquaintance with her, I doubt not your lordship will, ere long, be of my opinion; and the sooner to bring about that acquaintance, I shall have the honour to leave you to improve it."

As he uttered the last words, Captain Seymour again bowed to the Earl, and whistling a favourite opera air, to disguise his disappointment and mortification, he walked off. As for poor Emily Forester, the heroine of this disagreeable adventure, Captain Seymour had relinquished his hold of her arm, when first accosted by the Earl, and, unable to support herself from fright and fatigue, she had staggered back, and leaned against the park railing. The Earl now advanced, and with that air of courteous respect, which is, above all else, the characteristic of a first-class gentleman, offered her the support of his arm, and inquired whither he should have the honour of conducting her.

The old fable of the "Traveller, the Sun, and the Wind," constantly holds its moral. Emily was more overcome by the kindness, the respectful air of Lord Alverston, than she had been by all the rudeness of Captain Seymour. She endeavoured to speak, to thank her protector, to explain the untoward circumstances which had led her abroad at nearly ten o'clock in the evening, but she only uttered some half articulate sentences, from which the Earl understood that a severe accident to her little brother had compelled her to visit a neighbourhood which she had for some time avoided, in the fear of meeting Captain Seymour; but ere, as a *guarantee* for her respectability, and a foil to the Captain's

slanders, she could mention the name of her Aunt Danby, to whose house, indeed, she was proceeding when encountered by Captain Seymour, her harassed spirits, fatigue, and want of food—for, alas, poor Emily had tasted but little nourishment that day—completely overcame her, and she fainted.

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## CHAPTER IV.

“Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see ourselves, as others see us !”

BURNS.

A SENSE of the vanity of human hopes and expectations is often, in spite of themselves, forced upon even the most selfish, frivolous, and unthinking persons. Mrs. Danby was not altogether frivolous or unthinking, but she was as selfish as a woman could well be ; and she had laid her account with a triumph and display on the evening of her daughter's birthday, such as she had not yet enjoyed. Alas ! that very evening was destined to be one of intense mortification. The commencement of that mortification was, in the bitter words addressed to her by Laura ; its second stroke, in the visit of the person who had sent up to her the unseemly-looking scroll, that had excited the sneers of her daughter, and the mirth of her nieces. What passed on her interview with that man, not the most prying or anxious listener could have ascertained, as she gave him audience in the breakfast-room, which had double doors. But that the matter of that interview was by no means pleasing to her, was accurately surmised by her niece, Julia, who ventured, after it had lasted above half-an-hour, to knock, and apprise her aunt that the guests of the evening were beginning to arrive. Mrs. Danby herself opened the door on this summons, and it struck Julia, not only that her countenance was flushed and disturbed, but that she had even been weeping. Mrs. Danby seemed aware, too, of the suspicions which her appearance must excite, and though she at first pettishly rebuked

Julia for the intrusion, she corrected herself, and added, in a milder tone, "Indeed, my dear, I had forgotten all about the party; I am quite sorry it should have been announced for to-night, for I am really unfit to see company, my feelings have been so shocked. I have heard such a sad story here from Mr. Gregson, and he was so dear a friend of your poor uncle! But go and tell Laura I shall not be detained long, I shall be in the drawing-room presently."

"Oh, for that matter, ma'am," said the man, Gregson, rising, "I beg I may not keep you a minute longer. It was not quite right in me, perhaps, to intrude my troubles in the house of a great rich lady; but, you see, ma'am, necessity owns no law, and when the wife and the kids are starving, a fellow can't be very nice as to the fashion of getting bread for them, even though it comes to the liberty of asking quality-folks to help one to it."

"Oh, my good Mr. Gregson," interposed Mrs. Danby, "do not speak of your intrusion; I am but too happy to relieve a person who was so much and so justly esteemed by my husband."

Julia, who had been occupied in scrutinising her aunt's visitor, put her cambric handkerchief to her mouth, to conceal the smile which she could not refrain from at this speech; for not only did she know that her Aunt Danby was, in reality, a most hard-hearted and uncharitable woman, but had she been a personification of the heavenly virtue of benevolence, the appearance and manners of Mr. Gregson were calculated rather for repelling than evoking that virtue. There was, indeed, something so brutal and sinister in the aspect of this man, so squalid in his attire, that Julia, though by no means so refined and sensitive as she would have had other people believe, was, nevertheless, really shocked, and almost pitied her aunt, for the mysterious and stringent necessity which, the acute Julia was well convinced, would alone have compelled her to grant such a man a private interview.

It was impossible, even for a moment, to believe that this



man, Gregson, had ever filled a respectable position in society, or had been the companion or friend of Mr. Danby, *who*, despite his failure as a merchant, had always preserved the appearance and manners of a gentleman, and the character of a man of honour. In person, then, this Gregson was somewhat below the middle size, but giving in his broad chest, brawny shoulders, and large sinewy hands, the promise of great muscular strength. His countenance was even more repulsive than his figure; his complexion, though dark, was cadaverous, he had none of the healthiness of a brown skin, his forehead was low and retreating, his small spiteful black eyes deep-sunk in his head, and his chin much too large and long for the rest of the face. A consciousness, perhaps, of this last-named deformity, induced Mr. Gregson to wear, in the fashion of a mariner, a fringe of hair round the lower part of his face; but the mode, which is not unbecoming to a hearty and free-hearted sailor, by no means became a man whose whole air and aspect was that of a London house-breaker or pickpocket, rather than of a merry son of Neptune. The satirical observation afterwards made by Julia Barton, that her aunt had a Platonic affection for a baboon, was really justified by the aspect of Mr. Gregson, who much more resembled a monkey than a man; a certain sort of intelligence even, which was visible in his countenance, being that which belongs more to the brute than the human species. The attire of this man was quite at accord with his person and features; old and greasy trowsers, boots that were worn out at the heel, and had evidently long parted acquaintance with blacking, and a shabby surtout coat, fastened up to the chin, rather perhaps for the concealment of a defective shirt-front than in assumption of the *mode militaire*.

Truly, the five minutes which Julia Barton passed in the breakfast-room of her Aunt Danby's splendid mansion in Belgrave Square, on that occasion, were as many months almost of triumph; for Julia, to the full as envious, as *anning*, as self-seeking as her aunt, owed to the latter a

bitter grudge for the possession of the wealth which she felt, under the same fortuitous circumstances, might as well have been hers; for, taking advice from her own cunning, Julia very justly surmised the nature of the arts by which Mrs. Danby had bewildered the poor, weak, and doting old man, Sir Matthew Forester, into altering his will.

"I could have played that game as well as Aunt Danby," had Julia said a thousand times to her sister Caroline; and in the interview with Mr. Gregson, Julia rejoiced to her heart's core, that Mrs. Danby's fortunes were not all *coulour de rose*.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gregson began taking his leave, with a profusion of apologies for his intrusion at so unseasonable a time, which were not exactly couched in language that would have been chosen by Chesterfield, or even Lindley Murray. Mrs. Danby, however, took care to dispose of her niece ere this dear, distressed friend finally departed; bidding Julia return directly to the drawing-room, and tell Laura and Caroline that she would presently join them there.

Miss Barton did not hesitate to obey her aunt's injunction, and forthwith quitted the room, muttering to herself however,

"Dear aunt, how clever she is! She will not hinder my knowing something more of this adventure of hers, though, for all her cleverness."

Miss Julia was as good as her word. A beautiful Japan screen stood in the ante-chamber attached to the breakfast-room, and after shutting the outer door very loudly, Miss Julia slipped behind the screen; thus she heard the parting words of her aunt to the man Gregson, and his reply.

"You will observe," said the lady, as she issued from the breakfast-room and paused a moment to speak with her strange visitor in the ante-chamber, "I will not submit again to so infamous an extortion. I will not be made a bond-slave to you, and that vile, low, atrocious woman."

"Hard terms, my lady, hard terms!" said Gregson, with a

chuckling kind of laugh. "What is it after all? You should be a little reasonable, a little fair. Consider now, poor Ruth only for the means to live quiet and comfortable, and I mean no more, barring a few pounds for a bit of a spree now then; 'cause you sees, my lady, men cannot always enjoy themselves on the quiet; and what can a hundred pounds now then be to you, with all your fine houses, and jewels, and marriages, and servants? No, no, my lady! fair's fair, all the way over; fair play for the devil himself; and it is not by no means fair that you should be so great a lady, and grudge Ruth means to live a little comfortable, or me either, for the same of that."

"Your Ruth is a fool!" said Mrs. Danby, in a tone different to the soft and compassionate one she had used when speaking to this man when her niece was avowedly present. "Your Ruth is a fool, a wretched old fool, to take up with such a fellow as you are, and destroy her own comfort, and endanger mine, to support his debaucheries. At her time of life, too! I have no patience with her! But you will note, I will not be bound to supply money for your indulgences; no, not upon any threat that you, or I either, may presume to make."

"Ah, don't ye say so, my lady!" said the man, chuckling; "'cause, you see, it is foolish to say things that cannot stand to. What's a hundred pounds to you, now then, when you makes thousands by parting with the wretched? And as to calling Ruth a fool, why you see that's not fair neither, as she has only followed the usual way of her sex, in falling in love and taking a husband. It's only a natural motive. In course, the woman wanted a husband;—you all wants a husband, you women, gentle and simple, and if you don't get one in your young days, the reason to take him in the old ones; and that was the case with Ruth, you see, my lady. So, it's no manner of use to look sulky—you must come down with a reasonable quantity of the dust, and you may as well do it with a good quantity as a bad one. I shall not come again, just at pres-

but I do think that five hundred a-year is very moderate charges."

"Then, having now robbed me—for so I call it—of a hundred pounds," said Mrs. Danby, "you may, I think, at least release me from your further presence; especially when you know that I have company in the house, waiting my appearance. It will not benefit either you or Ruth to drive me to extremities."

"Bless your soul! my lady," answered the man, "I would not be unpolite for the world. Pray, go and see your visitors. What! don't I know that it is best for Ruth, and you too, to keep good friends? I'faith, if you turn foes, it would be diamond cut diamond, I am thinking. So do you play fair with Ruth, and she'll never play false to you; that I'll answer for, at any rate."

"Why, has Ruth hitherto had any just reason to complain of me?" answered Mrs. Danby. "But you will observe, that no consideration shall induce me to submit to an unlimited extortion, timed at Ruth's pleasure; and, after the large advance I have made to-night, I shall not expect to hear from Ruth again till quarter-day; beyond this, you, too, will observe, that I shall not again tolerate your intrusions. Let Ruth come herself, or send a messenger, whose appearance shall be less suspicious to my family and servants than yours is."

"Ah, my lady, you talk in a high strain," replied Gregson; "not over and above polite, neither; but of course I allow for your temper being a little roused. However, you will understand, that when it suits me to pay you a visit, I shall do so, though, for the look's sake of the thing, I promise to come in better trim next time, and will now rid you of my company, which I have not the vanity to suppose is any way agreeable."

With these words, uttered in a sneering tone, Gregson quitted the room—Mrs. Danby ringing the bell violently for one of the servants to show him out, and Julia could hear her throw herself on a chair, and burst into a fit of

passionate weeping, exclaiming, between her sobs, "Oh, heaven! but this wealth, this position, is dearly, dearly bought! I need not the froward temper of Laura to add to my troubles, or her dullness and selfishness, which makes it impossible to trust her! Well, I have fought hitherto boldly by myself, and must continue the game I have commenced. On one point, at least, I am determined: I will neither be made the tool of the vile, low wretch, Gregson, nor of the viler woman who is his accomplice. Oh, they had better beware!—they had better beware!—they shall neither thwart nor insult me with impunity!"

It was some minutes after Mrs. Danby had quitted the room, ere Julia Barton ventured from her place of concealment behind the screen. Among the crowd of company now beginning to assemble, she slipped through the hall, and, ere presenting herself in the saloon, retired for a few minutes to her bed-chamber.

As Julia there stood before the dressing-glass, and rearranged the ringlets of her black hair, she was conscious of an expression of triumph—of exultation in her own countenance, which it would be wise to subdue ere she again met Mrs. Danby. Julia sat down to compose herself, and also to meditate—for she was as much a plotter at twenty-five, as her Aunt Danby at fifty. She might, and did fairly expect to eclipse that lady in her own talents, before she reached her age; nay, it was some time since Julia had made up her mind to measure her arts against those of her aunt. Julia, as before said, owed Mrs. Danby a grudge, for the wealth which she had so iniquitously secured; and this grudge had been strengthened by the disdainful airs, the insolent exultation, in which both Mrs. Danby and her daughter had the meanness to indulge. Thus, though they admitted the Bartons to their fine mansion and splendid parties, it was upon terms that would not have been endured by young women possessing that sense of just pride, or rather self-respect, which no honourable person is without. The Bartons accepted those insulting courtesies; but even

they felt humiliated by them, and had, more than once, complained to Emily Forester of the careless way in which they were treated by the Danbys, and the pains which Miss Laura would sometimes take to inform her fashionable acquaintance, that the Bartons were poor relations, but that they were such dear, useful creatures, that mamma could not do otherwise than ask them, though their father was in trade. It was after having detailed to Emily some of these particulars of Laura Danby's purse-proud impertinence, that Julia Barton one day said, in speaking of another mutual acquaintance, that,

"At any rate, this much must be said for Susan Teal, that she had no pride."

"And do you think that a credit to Susan?" inquired Emily Forester.

"Decidedly!" answered Julia, tossing her head, with an air of self-approval, which she was fond of assuming. "Decidedly so; if pride is not a bad quality, I should be glad to know what is one?"

"Yet," said Emily, smiling, "the poet tells us that 'pride oft saves man, and woman too, from falling!' Perhaps he should rather have called the feeling, self-respect; but it is quite certain, Julia, that if you yourself had this feeling—call it pride or not—it would save you the mortifications you encounter from Mrs. Danby and Laura; for you would be too proud to visit people who so plainly say, that they confer a favour on you by their invitations."

Julia, who could not refute this censure, took the usual refuge of persons who are convinced against their will, and made no answer. Yet, though for the sake of visiting in a fine house, and riding in a carriage, and occasionally receiving a present of a handsome dress, Julia could meanly endure all the insolence of Laura Danby. Yet she had her pride, too, of such a sort as it was; a pride that matched that of the deer in behalf of his antlers, which made him a prey to the hunters, from whom his despised legs would have saved him. This pride of Julia Barton

consisted in her contempt of the respectable business by which she and her family had been supported all their lives : trade, however honest or honourable, was a disgrace in Julia's eyes, but to keep a shop was the depth of degradation. To hide as much as possible this hateful circumstance of shop-keeping, even from themselves, Julia and her sister Caroline had prevailed upon their father to take a house in St. John's Wood, far away from his business, and the heavy rent of which was gradually drawing him into severe embarrassments. Like his daughters, however, Mr. Barton was weak and vain, and was well contented that they should live in a handsome private house, and keep three female servants, and dress fashionably, and visit and be visited by Mrs. Danby.

Still, as before said, Julia and Caroline, too, owed their aunt and cousin a deep grudge for their insolence and their superior position ; which grudge Julia, who was by far the sharpest witted of the two sisters, had assured Caroline that, sooner or later, she would repay with compound interest. Julia really was as much attached to her sister, as Mrs. Danby was to her daughter Laura ; and her affection was just of the same instinctive and irrational character. Beyond this, too, Julia had persuaded herself that her sister Caroline was a beauty of a class far superior to Laura Danby. It is true, that Julia's opinion upon this point was not that of people in general, and there were, indeed, some spiteful persons, both male and female, who had been heard to say, that Julia's good opinion of Caroline's attractions was founded upon that young lady's resemblance to herself, in the tendency to a negro cast of feature, and a complexion swarthy as that of an American Indian. The two sisters were so alike, that they might, but for the difference of six years in their age, have without difficulty passed for twins.

Thus, however, it was ; Julia considered her sister a *beauty*, and as, in her own family, Julia had managed to *obtain the character* of a young woman of great discern-

ment and strength of mind, her father and his connections, and Miss Caroline herself, very readily took up with a view so agreeable; and it was forthwith settled that Caroline was the beauty of the Bartons, and Julia the wit, and the fortune of the family was to be made between the one and the other.

Julia, however, had no grand ideas, as to the mode of making a fortune; it was the tortuous, winding way which she meant to pursue. She could imagine no better scheme than to follow up the intrigues of her aunt, and to defeat that lady on her own ground. Thus, though Laura and her mother had amused themselves with the supposition, Caroline was, by both herself and her sister, very seriously proposed as the rival of Laura for winning the Earl of Alverston, held as one of the greatest matrimonial prizes in the fashionable world. But vanity is a comfortable absurdity, and both Laura and Caroline were satisfied as to their own powers of captivating a proud, accomplished, and fastidious young man, for whom more than one heiress of high birth had angled in vain.

Julia's vanity, then, on behalf of her sister, fully persuaded her that, could she but obtain the opportunity, and keep that odious Laura a little in the background, Caroline was secure of a coronet. To attain, however, this much-desired bauble, it was necessary to be on far more equal terms with Mrs. Danby; and Julia, who judged her aunt by herself, had determined, from the hour that she was admitted as a kind of half-resident visitor, that, sooner or later, her aunt should yield to the same artifice and intrigue which she had formerly practised, and become herself as imbecile and unresisting as she had made Sir Matthew Forester. How fine an opportunity for perfecting a plot of this kind was now offered by Julia's knowledge of the particulars of her aunt's interview with the man, Gregson! No wonder that it tested all the excellence of Julia's art to assume, on this occasion, a calm and unsuspecting demeanour, when, on descending to the saloon, she found

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Mrs. Danby laughing and chatting among her guests, with an exuberance of gaiety, which it required a far less acute perception than that of Julia to detect, as assumed to mask the perturbation into which she had been thrown by the visit of Mr. Gregson. That evening was certainly doomed, in all its events, to be vexatious to Mrs. Danby. It was now nearly half-past ten, and the Earl had not yet made his appearance. Of course, it was to be expected that he would come; but the honour of his company for a few minutes, or just when supper was served, by no means would have satisfied Mrs. Danby, who had somewhat imprudently hinted at the extent of her hopes respecting him, to more than one of her former acquaintances; women quite as vain and spiteful, if not so cunning and fortunate as herself—whose husbands had kept their credit when Mr. Danby was bankrupt, and who lived in good style for the middling class, keeping, perhaps, a handsome brougham, or even a carriage and pair; but who, with their houses on Tulse, or Forest Hill, or the new-built squares in the vicinity of the Parks, had no thought of matching their daughters with Earls, and were very angry with Mrs. Danby for even indulging such an ambition. Mrs. Danby was not magnanimous in the enjoyment of her wealth; she never so much enjoyed it as when she could, by its display, annoy and mortify her former acquaintance—people who had at one time been better off than herself, and whom she noticed in her present prosperity only with the above-named amiable intent. Thus, to this evening entertainment, Mrs. Danby had invited all her old friends, who could wear costly dresses and ride in their own carriages, and a few even who had not attained that great middle-class point of distinction.

Among the former of these was a Mrs. Jephson, wife of a stockbroker, who had had a run of luck in the money market, and who delighted in a little shrewish, snub-nosed wife, and three grown-up daughters, who, whether they resembled their papa or mamma, could equally boast of beauty, Mr. Jephson having a long thin face, and his wife

a round, fat one, which long thin face was furthermore adorned with a nose, the tint of which slanderous tongues asserted to be borrowed from rare old port. The other most intimate and dear friends, whom Mrs. Danby had invited upon this occasion, were Susan Teal, whose lack of pride had been so highly praised by Julia Barton ; and a Mrs. Price, a lady of small independent property, and the mother of a respectable and thriving attorney. This lady, Mrs. Price, who, by her own acknowledgment, had seen sixty-five years in the world, was very shrewd, and, in spite of her age, very healthy and vivacious. Mrs. Price was really not deficient in that clear, strong common-sense, which, in this hard-dealing world, is so useful an endowment for its possessor. Left a widow at an early age, she had, by her industry and self-denial, greatly contributed to place her son in the respectable sphere in which he moved ; and her conduct had been the more meritorious, because she had not herself enjoyed the advantage of a good education. Mrs. Price, however, like other sensible, and, in some respects, worthy people, had her peculiar failing and folly ; and a very mischievous folly it was, for Mrs. Price was an inveterate match-maker ; she had married her son in spite of himself, and Mr. Price, a man in weak health, and with quiet, studious habits, found himself, he scarce knew how, yoked to a gay young wife, whose first care was to pack his meddling mother out of the house—rather an ungrateful act, since it was the old lady who had, in fact, wooed her to a very comfortable home. This match-making, then, for other people, was the failing of Mrs. Price ; but that she would, in addition, and in spite of her grave son, and her grandchildren, and her sixty-five years, have made a match for herself, was her very egregious folly, of which her son was thoroughly ashamed. According to Mrs. Price's own account, every third man she met was in love with her ; and she was continually regaling the ears of her acquaintance with long accounts of the persecutions she sustained from her admirers, who would walk before the house in which she

lived, and make signs at the windows, and compel her, unhappy Diana, to take refuge in flight, and continually change her lodgings. The most whimsical point, too, of this old lady's idiosyncrasy was, that while at sixty-five she considered herself eligible for the court of Cupid, every unmarried woman who was out of her teens was warned by Mrs. Price that she stood in a critical position; while at twenty-five she declared them irredeemable old maids; thus cruelly cutting off the five years allowed by the most barbarous of novelists, who allow that till thirty a woman may justly repel the frightful appellation of "an old maid."

It may be well supposed that, as a consequence of these absurdities, Mrs. Price was laughed at by all the elderly females of her acquaintance, and thoroughly detested by the young ones, whom she never failed, in some fashion, to affront; and her daughter-in-law, indeed, who owed her no good will, asserted that she owed a grudge to all young and handsome women because they were so. Whether that were the case or not, she had managed so often to offend Laura Danby, and her cousins the Bartons, that they had all three united in entreating Mrs. Danby to send Mrs. Price a card for the grand party, "in order," as they said, "to drive the odious old thing wild with mortification!"

Mrs. Price, however, with all her faults, was not altogether a bad-hearted woman; and she was tolerably free from the common and petty malice which is exasperated by pecuniary prosperity. Her son was doing well, and Mrs. Price had enough herself to live in respectability and comfort, and therefore, with great equanimity, contemplated the splendid furniture, and carriages, and jewels of the Danbys.

Mrs. Price, be it observed, was very gay in her dress, the colours and fashion of which was in general as unsuited to her years as was her fancy that men were in love with her. On this occasion, the old lady was one of the first persons that Julia Barton encountered on entering the saloon; and her appearance was calculated highly to gratify the latter, who was well pleased that a person she so much disliked

should look ridiculous. Instead, then, of a dark velvet or brocade, or some other heavy material suited to her years, Mrs. Price on this occasion was attired in a sky-blue satin, trimmed with white lace, with large loose sleeves, that at every movement exposed an arm which had never been very white or well-shaped, and was now discoloured and sinewy with age, a defect which was further aggravated by the contrast with bracelets set with turquoise and pearls. Round her wrinkled throat, too, the old lady wore a pearl necklace; and a dress cap of the most delicate blonde, ornamented with blush-roses, was jauntily placed upon her false hair, while over her shoulders she wore a large lace shawl.

"Good heavens!" said Caroline Barton to Susan Teal, "do look at that absurd old woman, dressed in the same colour as Laura wears—sky-blue. Really, as Dogberry says, 'comparisons are odorous,' but it is a wonder to me that people cannot choose dress that suits their appearance!"

"Bless me, my dear," said Mrs. Price herself to Susan Teal, not ten minutes afterwards, "what a bad taste Caroline Barton has in dress! How could she think of wearing white satin trimmed with lilies of the valley, with her mulatto complexion? why, her arms look downright black beside it. And, bless me, what a plain young woman she is!"

"La! Mrs. Price," answered Miss Teal, who was a very dear friend indeed of the Bartons, "do you think Caroline plain? Why, all her family consider her a beauty. She told me herself, that the other night a gentleman at the theatre remarked what a beautiful foreign face she had. Indeed, she says that the men in general pay her the most extravagant compliments!"

"Psha!—bah!—stuff!—gammon!" cried Mrs. Price, slapping her knee, and throwing herself back in her chair, a common fashion with her when she strongly dissented from anything said in her presence. "Stuff!—gammon! Susan. Do not believe such nonsense, child: the men either do not say such things at all, or they say them by way of a quiz;

and the poor stupid girl takes their impudent jokes for earnest. Ah, hem! Nice old maids they'll be, those Bartons; and you too, Susan, if you don't look out. Well, I'll see if I cannot think of a husband for you."

"I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Price," answered Susan, "but when I am in want of a husband, I'll find one for myself."

"Ah, hem! not such an easy matter perhaps, child!" retorted Mrs. Price. "Don't be affronted. Take good advice. Make hay while the sun shines. Don't stand out your market. Ah, hem! here comes Mrs. Jephson and her frights. Good policy of Mrs. Danby to ask them here to-night. Ah, leave her alone: she knows how to play her cards. Mrs. Jephson does not seem over comfortable, though. Psha! bah! she is not used to see such people as are here to-night. Does not know how to behave, or keep herself to herself among them."

This last remark of Mrs. Price was very correct. Mrs. Jephson, in the parties which she attended and gave, had not been used to meet with persons of real fashion, and the consciousness that she was now in the same room with baronets and lords, and where a real live earl was expected, made the poor woman feel thoroughly nervous and uncomfortable, so that she was glad even to knock up a conversation with Mrs. Price, as a refuge from her confusion; a confusion in which Mrs. Price did not share, for she was really, apart from her matrimonial delusions, a woman of sense, who knew how to conduct herself with decorum, and took no shame to herself from the apprehension of her own ignorance of the forms of fashionable society.

That very embarrassment, however, which Mrs. Jephson was angry with herself for feeling, quickened her ill-nature towards the Danbys, who, forsooth, felt themselves at home with, and belonging to, the society by which Mrs. Jephson was overawed. Her first remark, therefore, to Mrs. Price was a spiteful one.

"Well, Mrs. Price, and what do you think of these rooms?"

"That they are very handsome, ma'am," answered Mrs. Price.

"Oh, la!" returned Mrs. Jephson, "there is no accounting for taste; but, to my mind, they are too showy."

"Can't say that I think straw-colour is particularly showy," said Mrs. Price drily, "and the chairs and hangings are all straw-colour."

"Oh, no, not straw-colour by itself," said Mrs. Jephson, who was determined to find the grapes sour which she could not reach, "not straw-colour by itself; but then all those Chinese figures of birds and flowers, wrought on them in floss silk, and the silver cordings and fringe, altogether those hangings are very showy, to my mind, and very extravagant, too, for that matter."

"Well, ma'am," returned Mrs. Price, in the coarse, curt tone which she had before used, "I suppose that Mrs. Danby can pay for her hangings?"

"Oh, no doubt; Sir Matthew Forester's fortune was a tolerably large one, I believe," answered Mrs. Jephson; "and, not that I wish to say a word against Mrs. Danby, who is a friend I very much esteem, but I must say to you, in confidence, my dear Mrs. Price, and not wishing it repeated, I think it was a shameful thing of that old man to leave the whole fortune to Mrs. Danby, without a why or a wherefore, and leave the poor young thing he had brought up, with the notion that she was to have all his money, without a shilling to keep her from starving. I have heard that was what he did, but I don't know Miss Forester, and of course I should not like Mrs. Danby to know that I had expressed such an opinion."

"I dare say not, ma'am," said Mrs. Price; "but let me tell you that it is not wise in that case to talk so freely. How do you know but what I might repeat every word you have said, to Mrs. Danby? Oh! do not look so frightened, I shall not repeat it, because I am of the same opinion with yourself; and, moreover, have to say that Emily Forester is a sweet girl, and that I think she has been vilely used; and

that Sir Matthew was an old rascal, and Mrs. Danby ought to be ashamed of herself. And now you can tell her that I say so, for I have told her something very much like it myself."

Mrs. Jephson made no immediate reply to this matter-of-fact speech, but presently, with a kind of simper, she said, "It seems the great gentleman of all, that Miss Laura is to be married to, this fine young Earl, is not come yet."

"Did they tell you Laura was to be married to him?" said Mrs. Price. "Psha, bah! they would not tell me so. They mean to catch him if they can; but my son knows—he has heard—he had some business with the Earl's lawyer—bah! the Earl of Alverston is not a marrying man; at least not for such mincing, twittering, tittering misses as Laura Danby."

"La! Mrs. Price, you don't say so?" said Mrs. Jephson, quite charmed with the idea that Mrs. Danby had overshot her mark for once, and that the chance of Miss Laura being made a countess was not so immediately imminent. "Well, of course Mrs. Danby did not say directly that the Earl had made Laura an offer, but, for all that, she meant us to understand that he was quite in love with her, that I know. But then I said to Mr. Jephson, to my mind Laura is no such great beauty after all, but then she has a large fortune, and we all know that these fine lords and men of fashion are, one half of them, as poor as church mice."

"The Earl of Alverston is very rich, ma'am!" retorted Mrs. Price.

"Well, to be sure," said Mrs. Jephson; "I shall wonder then if he marries Laura."

"You needn't wonder at anything in this world," answered Mrs. Price, who delighted in contradiction, and what she called speaking her mind, which in fact consisted, as it does with all people who make that boast, in saying impertinent and disagreeable things to every one who came in her way.

During this conversation of the two elderly ladies, Miss Teal and the Misses Jephson had drawn off to join a group of young ladies who were gathered round Miss Laura, and

who were showing off a great many affected, and, as they thought, pretty airs; presently, however, a servant summoned Laura away from her companions, and she left the room. Mrs. Price and Mrs. Jephson, engaged in their not very amiable colloquy, had not observed the absence, for some minutes past, of Mrs. Danby herself; but they were now rejoined by the Misses Jephson and Susan Teal, who felt all that sincerity of disinterested friendship for Laura Danby which is so common among young ladies, and so beautiful to contemplate. Miss Teal, it should be observed, was a young lady whose very slender person might have been called skinny, by those inclined to criticise severely; her face was long and narrow, with small features, the length of the face being attributable to the preponderance of chin, as the forehead was unusually low; her thin and generally compressed lips were very red, her hair black, and her complexion pallid. The most disagreeable characteristic of Miss Teal, however, was a pair of deeply-set gray eyes, surmounted by very black and heavy brows; those eyes having in them such an expression of aspic malignity, peering, as they seemed to do, beneath the dark brow, that it would have tasked the utmost liberality of a physiognomist to form a favourable judgment of Miss Teal.

"Oh! dear Mrs. Price, dear Mrs. Jephson!" said this young lady, advancing with upheld hands; "only think what a beautiful, romantic incident! The Earl has come, and brought a young lady here, in a fainting-fit, who turns out to be no other than Emily Forester! Julia Barton just slipped up stairs to tell me, but she has gone down again. They have got Emily in the breakfast-room; Mrs. Danby and Laura are with her, but I shall run down myself, and see if I can do anything for them; it would not be friendly to stay here, so intimate as I and mamma are with the family."

With these words, Miss Teal tripped off, bustling her way through the crowd of guests, whom delicacy detained in the saloon, with the assurance that her feelings were so much



the sly thing only wants to get him to be fool enough to marry her. It was just her luck for the Earl to stumble on this acquaintance with her; and young men are so foolish, that one doesn't know. To be sure, if Miss Emily does have the folly to form any hopes in that quarter, there are quite ways and means enough to break them up."

"What do you mean, Julia?" inquired Mrs. Danby, with an affected anger. "Emily can scarce have the conceit to think that Lord Alverston will fall in love with and marry her. She has no fortune, and she is not near as handsome as Laura."

"Why, as to the fortune, aunt," said Julia, "men who are rich don't care much about fortune, where they take a fancy. And, as to her beauty—well, you and I may not think her as handsome as Laura, but there is no accounting for taste. She certainly is very pretty; and then, you know, she is so accomplished, and so clever, and so well-read. I am sure I have been always disgusted with the way in which she put herself forwards in conversation, with her wit, and her poetry, and her talk about painting and music, as if she understood everything! It is much more becoming, I am sure, for a girl to be quiet, like your Laura or our Caroline, than to join in all sorts of conversation, as Miss Emily does. However, that is neither here nor there. I can tell you that she takes people in to form wonderful opinions of her, with her fine talk: and I have seen quite enough of the Earl, even to-night, to be sure that he is just the kind of man to think that her wonderful education, and fine talk, just fits her to be a great lady; and, if we don't find some way to sicken him of her, I would not give much for Laura's chance."

"Oh, if it comes to that, Julia," said Mrs. Danby, sharply, "I shall take care he does not see the young lady again. As soon as she gets better, I shall pack her off to some cheap lodging in the country, and I suppose I must give her *mother some pension or annuity?*"

"Oh, my dear aunt, that would never do. Depend upon

it, if you spirit Miss Emily out of the Earl's way. in that manner, he will raise heaven and earth to find her out. You must give him plenty of line, as skilful anglers do with the trout. Let him see Emily as often as he likes, and form as favourable an impression of her as he may, and leave me to play off Captain Seymour against him: and the better he thinks of Emily at first, the worse it shall be for her in the end."

Mrs. Danby did not make an immediate answer to this speech. She was, in fact, a little startled at the sudden contemplation of a genius for fraud, bolder and more inventive even than her own. Julia stood quietly waiting the effect of her counsel. Presently Mrs. Danby bowed deeply and said—

"But how, Julia, do you expect to accomplish all this?"

"Trust me, my dear aunt," answered Julia, "I shall not fail in the nerve to execute what I have the honour to propose. But, in the first place, let me tell you, you are to be a sharer in my labour, so far. You and Laura must be sure to be very fond of Emily: the Earl will never suspect slander if we seem kind. Indeed, to tell you the truth, I ventured a little to begin operations that very day, when you declared that a servant should go to America, and explain about Emily being brought home. I was, however, put off, and you that are so good, must be so good that you will be good for nothing, if you do not do that here, while I am wanted for nothing elsewhere. We waited till Monday and then we told the Earl that we had been very much surprised to hear that it was through his father's kindness that Emily had been discovered, and we said that they would not, in any case, make any provision."

"Z. Wie wir es bringen f. u. m."

Darby. But a stronger woman than she spoke, he was a better man than she was a better man, and would be than herself. The

her aunt's perturbation, but, stooping to kiss her, she replied,

"Well, dear aunt, I will not keep you a minute longer out of bed. It shall be all right. Laura shall be a countess yet, if you will but leave Miss Emily to me. And, by-the-bye, would not that man Gregson, who was here to-night, be of use? It strikes me that he would. However, you and I will have a chat about that in the morning. Good night, darling aunt; go to bed now, and sleep."

With the last words, Julia quitted her aunt, and retraced the way to Emily's chamber, with a smile of triumphant malice curling her lip; but Mrs. Danby sat still in her chair, with her face deadly pale, and her hands rigidly locked in each other.

"Oh, heavens!" she at last ejaculated, "that plotting, cunning girl, does she suspect?"

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## CHAPTER V.

"I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,  
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,  
Baited with reasons not unplausible,  
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,  
And hug him into snares."

COMUS.

A MONTH had passed away—a weary month for Emily Forester, and one, the events of which had not been altogether pleasing to Mrs. Danby. For the crowning-stroke of her annoyances, Emily had become so ill on the night that she was taken by the Earl of Alverston to Belgrave Square, that those worldly decencies, which Mrs. Danby found it expedient to preserve, quite forbade her removal. For two days, indeed, poor Emily had lain in a high delirium, while the nervous fever, the effect of anxiety and insufficient nourishment, was at its height.

*So soon, however, as she had recovered her senses, she shared in the uneasy feelings of her aunt; for it was to her,*

at least, as disagreeable to become even a temporary guest of that lady, as it could be for Mrs. Danby so to receive her. Emily had too much penetration not to see through the veil of her aunt's pretended kindness, and could she have supposed it even partially sincere, she had not that saint-like disposition, which would have urged her to turn the left cheek after having been smitten on the right, or patiently and gratefully to accept the crumbs from a table which ought of right to have been her own. Thus it was that Emily earnestly entreated to be sent even from the luxuries and comforts of her aunt's mansion to her own poor house, the lodging of her mother and herself, in an obscure street of the Tottenham Court Road. Mrs. Danby would gladly have acceded to this desire of Emily; the more gladly, that the medical attendant declared that a too sudden removal would, probably, cause a dangerous relapse—for Mrs. Danby hated her niece with the intense and merciless hatred which the injurer bears to the injured. But Mrs. Danby had a part to perform, and she suspected that Julia Barton had not over-estimated the romantic attraction with which the distresses of Emily invested her in the eyes of the Earl of Alverston; and the intriguing aunt found that her own utmost cunning would be tasked to enable her to carry a fair face with the Earl, and to conceal from him the extent of the poverty of the Foresters.

Early on the morning after his rencontre with Emily, the young nobleman presented himself at the house of Mrs. Danby, to inquire after the health of Miss Forester, with whose name, indeed, he was familiar, as that of the old Anglo-Indian, the owner of Elmwood. Of the manner in which Sir Matthew had transferred his property from Emily to her aunt and cousin, Lord Alverston was ignorant, for he had been on the Continent for the two years preceding Sir Matthew's death; and his stately aunt, Lady Barbara, disclaimed even a knowledge of the proceedings of her plebeian neighbours, though some whisper of the injustice of Sir Matthew reached even her aristocratic ears from the lips of her own attendant, a maiden

as starched and ancient as Lady Barbara herself, but who, nevertheless, had been pleased to vouchsafe an interest in the fortunes of Emily, whom she had once encountered in a farm-house during a summer-storm, and whose kind and sweet manner had charmed even the prim old waiting-woman. Lady Barbara, too, had seen Emily at church, and Laura Danby also, and though she would not own—no, not even to her favourite attendant—that she also was tempted to join in approval of the delicate beauty and lady-like air of Emily, she did not scruple to remark upon the boldness and coarseness of Laura; adding that, with regard to Sir Matthew's final disposition of his property, it was just what might have been expected, as ill-got gains were seldom other than ill-spent.

Sir Matthew, it should be observed, died in France. Lord Alverston was at that time in Germany; but when he returned home, the Christmas after Sir Matthew's death, he found Mrs. Danby and her daughter the possessors of Elmwood. Of Emily he knew nothing, as it was not till after the period when he was a school-boy at Eton, that she had been a resident at Elmwood. Lady Barbara had never, of course, condescended to speak to her nephew of persons so much below her sphere as she considered the Danbys. She would not even elevate them into importance, by imparting her suspicions of the intent with which Mrs. Danby endeavoured to intrude on her so many civilities, the motive with which, in spite of numerous, and what must have been, even to her, most humiliating repulses, she still endeavoured to force an acquaintance.

Thus it was, that in his utter ignorance of all the domestic broils between the Danbys and Foresters, that the Earl embarrassed even the astute Mrs. Danby, by inquiring whether her niece, Miss Forester, was not a relation of the former possessor of Elmwood. In spite of her assurance, Mrs. Danby flushed to the temples. In her pride and ostentation, she fancied that as she took part in the proceedings at Alverston Castle, she must needs

concern themselves with the state of things at Elmwood, and that hence an even exaggerated account of her intrigues and injustice had reached the ears of the Earl. She blushed, therefore, and stammered, and muttered she scarce knew what, that—"Yes, Emily was related to Sir Matthew; yes, a relation, certainly."

Though, with the free and frank nature of youth, blessed with all kind of worldly prosperity, the Earl was the least suspicious of men, he must have observed the confusion of Mrs. Danby, had not the useful Julia come to her relief. Julia worked very hard, certainly, in the prosecution of her projects. She had sat up all night beside the sick and delirious Emily, whom she really nursed with tenderness and skill; she had that morning written the kindest of letters to her Aunt Forester, and accompanied it with five pounds out of a present of twenty, which had the day before been given to her by Mrs. Danby; and this note and money she had despatched by her sister Caroline, who, though she had a charitable desire to visit her sick aunt and the little suffering Walter, did not presume to dispute Julia's commands: and Julia assured her that nothing would look more amiable in the eyes of the Earl, than such a visit of charity on Caroline's part, while Laura kept her bed-room, like the chrysalis in its shell. Laura was always indolently inclined, but on this occasion, Julia had found time to visit her, and encourage that indolence, by assuring her that she owed herself at least an extra two hours' rest, after the excitement which had been occasioned to her by Emily's illness on the preceding night.

"Ah," exclaimed Laura, turning herself sulkily on her pillow, "pray, how is the young lady, Julia?"

"Well," answered the latter, "I must say, Laura, I do think, myself, that she is really very ill, and that there is not so much pretence about the matter as we thought."

"I hope, for my part," exclaimed Laura, "she will not be taking it into her head to die, while she is in this house, at any rate! If she were away from us, she might die as soon

as she pleased, for she is a horrid bore, like all poor relations. I am sure I wish there were no such people in the world!"

Julia Barton took a portion of this amiable wish to herself, and in her heart she thanked Miss Danby for its insolence; but she only said—"Now, Laura, dear, don't put yourself out of the way. It would certainly be a great relief, both to you and dear aunt, if Emily were dead; it is very annoying to hear about people who are so poor, especially when they will not put up with their poverty, but give themselves airs, and are proud, as the Foresters have always been; at the same time, you know, my dear, it is not always quite prudent to say all that we think. It is very natural that you should wish Emily was dead, but it would not sound quite so well to say so. Now, do consider your interests, darling, and take my word for it, the best way to secure the Earl, is by pretending to be very fond of Emily!"

"Don't talk to me of the Earl!" answered Laura, more pettishly than before. "Here has mamma been boring me half-an-hour ago to get up, in case he should call this morning, to inquire after Miss Emily, forsooth!"

"Not very likely, my dear," returned Julia. "At any rate, you keep yourself quiet; and, if he does come, I will tell him you are quite worn out with attending to Emily."

"Ah, Julia, you are the best creature in the world," said Laura, turning again upon her pillow, from beneath which, as Julia left the room, she drew a small perfumed billet, which she read two or three times over, ere the clock struck the hour of noon, and she surrendered herself to a comfortable doze.

Julia, on her part, hastened to her own chamber, saw Caroline depart on her errand to Mrs. Forester, and attired herself in an elegant morning-dress, to be ready to receive the Earl on the visit which she was well assured he would make. Thus it was, that when Lord Alverston's question as to *the connection between the deceased Sir Matthew and Miss Forester* put Mrs. Danby to some confusion, that Julia

replied, with a quickness and felicity of invention that astonished and almost scared that lady herself.

"Dear aunt," said Julia, looking with an air of admiring affection at Mrs. Danby, ere she turned to address the Earl, "now, I know, if I were not present, you would not do yourself justice. The truth is, my lord, that Sir Matthew was the uncle of dear Emily's father and Mrs. Danby, and a most eccentric person, and my poor uncle Forester was little less so; and two of a temper, you know, my lord, agree almost as ill as two of a trade; and then, you know, that odious money makes so many differences in this sad world, and my uncle Forester was rather extravagant, poor man! and Sir Matthew was very capricious; and so it turned out that, in the end, Sir Matthew left his property to dear Aunt Danby and Laura instead of the Foresters. But, that need not have made one ill word, for she offered, directly the old man was dead, to divide it all with her brother; and, I must say, my lord, in my humble opinion, it is not an estimable sort of pride which leads a brother to refuse a favour at a sister's hands, which was what my uncle Forester did. He chose to remain in poverty rather than take a share of his uncle's fortune with his sister. I am very much afraid there was a little avarice in the matter, and that he wanted it all; but Aunt Danby was only too good and generous for him, as, indeed, she is for the whole world; for she will bear with the most odious slanders, sooner than the real truth should be told about her brother."

"Ah, my dear Julia," said Mrs. Danby, immediately taking the cue thrown out by her niece, and putting her cambric handkerchief to her eyes, to hide the tears she did not shed, "pray, spare me. You know this subject overcomes me, and we should not intrude our family sorrows on Lord Alverston; but, indeed, the unkind mistrust of my poor brother will afflict me to the day of my own death."

"You are too romantic, my dear aunt, in making yourself miserable about the sufferings of other people, when they are caused by their own conduct!" said Julia, "and, I am



sure, Lord Alverston will agree with me, that it was a very ungenerous pride in my uncle that made him refuse to let you repair the effects of his own quarrel with Sir Matthew; and that I am quite right to tell the truth about the whole affair, and to feel angry when I hear spiteful, gossiping people passing their censures upon you, as if, forsooth, it was a crime in you that Sir Matthew left you his fortune!"

"Oh, do not talk upon this sad, sad subject, my dear Julia," said Mrs. Danby, still affecting to weep; "you know that it is more than I can bear!"

Mrs. Danby was really, as her daughter had told her the night before, a very accomplished actress, and her pretended emotion so much imposed upon Lord Alverston, that it was with great earnestness of manner he said: "Indeed, my dear madam, I must agree with Miss Barton that you afflict yourself unreasonably. It is very true, that is indeed a poor and mean mind which disdains an honest obligation; and where can there be one more legitimate than that which a sister offers to a brother? But it is to be hoped that this delusion of the unfortunate gentleman has not been shared by his family."

"Alas, yes, my lord!" answered Mrs. Danby; "my poor brother, his intellects must surely have been affected, or he would never have treated me so cruelly; but, alas! he infused but too many of his own prejudices into the mind of that dear girl whom you brought here last night. My sister-in-law, Mrs. Forester, has done me more justice; but think, my lord, what my feelings must be, when my dear niece, whom I love almost as much as if she were my daughter, exposes herself to such indignities as you kindly rescued her from last night, because she will not be obliged to me!"

This implication of Emily in the charge of an inexorable and base pride, was shooting the bolt too far; for Lord Alverston was somewhat of a disciple of Lavater, and there was amidst *its* expression of suffering and sorrow, something so pure, so candid and intellectual in the lovely face of Emily, that he

could not believe her the character she was represented; and he perhaps too warmly expressed this favourable opinion, for Mrs. Danby winced under his remarks, as she gathered from them that, forlorn and ill even as Emily had been on her single interview with Lord Alverston, her beauty had yet made on him that first strong impression which, after all, is mainly decisive in affairs of the heart. Julia was the better tactician of the two. She launched out into praises of Emily's general character, assuring Lord Alverston that she was the dearest, sweetest girl in the world; but that her attachment to her father had been of that unusual and devoted kind, that she placed a blind faith even in his prejudices, and, out of love to his memory, mistrusted even her good and generous aunt. From the subject of Emily, Julia led the conversation in an almost imperceptible manner to the mention of Laura and Caroline, taking care to make known to the Earl, that the latter, though the morning was cold, wet, and unpleasant, had gone to see Mrs. Forester.

When the Earl had gone, Mrs. Danby found fault with her niece, saying that she had spoken of Emily in such favourable terms, that his desire to become acquainted with her would now probably be stronger than before.

"Very likely, aunt," answered Julia, "and it was that I wished. All you should require, in the first instance, is, that the Earl should continue his visits; and his anxiety to know more of Emily will be the bait to draw him hither, but not the one at which we intend the noble gudgeon should finally bite. Fair and softly, dear aunt! Let it become a custom of the Earl to visit here, and a custom of ours to make him comfortable."

Upon this principle of Julia, the Earl was made comfortable, in his frequent visits to Belgrave Square. Indeed, he found himself particularly comfortable when Emily's convalescence permitted her to appear in the back drawing-room, for he discovered her mind no less charming than her face. Emily possessed, in an eminent degree, that attraction so rare among English women—a manner piquant and

winning, without the least taint of forward boldness, and an enchanting talent for conversation. It was this last talent, refined by a knowledge of polite literature unusual at her years, united to an exquisite taste, that had especially excited the envy and hatred of Julia Barton, who possessed an infinity of cunning, but not an iota of talent or sound sense. Unhappily, however, in this world, not only are such characters as Julia Barton very common, and those resembling Emily Forester very rare; but as the former are always intent on doing ill—and to do ill is the easiest thing in the world—they seldom fail of accomplishing some great if not irreparable injury towards the persons whose talents, beauty, or virtues provoke their bad feelings.

While she was yet unable to rise from her sick bed, Emily had earnestly entreated to be taken home, a measure which Mrs. Danby would not allow. When she was so far recovered as to be able to see, and thank, and converse with the Earl of Alverston, she became, she did not at first understand why, much less uneasy at her compelled stay with the Danbys.

Mrs. Danby noticed this, and one day angrily told Julia that, with all her wonderful cleverness, she had overshot her mark, and that the Earl was becoming seriously in love with Emily.

Julia laughed. "Wait a little, dear aunt," she said; "that is just what I intend; not only that the Earl should be in love with Emily, but that she should be in love with him. I do not know even that it would not be advisable to let him proceed so far as a proposal."

"If that be your design, Julia," returned Mrs. Danby, bitterly, "I think you may be pretty sure of its accomplishment. If you will just now step into the back drawing-room, I think it will require something more than even your confidence to promise any chance of Laura becoming the Countess of Alverston."

Julia laughed again—that low, malignant laugh, which was infinitely disagreeable to the ear; but she looked into the back drawing-room, as her aunt desired.

Cold and astute as was Julia Barton's usual manner, she could at times exhibit a frightful violence of temper; a violence, indeed, which none of her own family had cared to oppose, and which, together with their opinions of her great wit and wisdom, had mainly contributed to her influence over them. Neither, while intriguing to procure a husband for her sister Caroline, was Julia by any means inclined herself to wither on the "virgin thorn of single blessedness." Though neither amiable nor handsome, the combined art and boldness of Julia had enabled her to entrammel, with one of those unpromising engagements which are the bane of so many people, a young lawyer, who, though a person of gentlemanly manners and easy temper, had by no means either the talent or the industry necessary to make way in a profession which demands so much of both. He told Julia that he was too poor to marry, and this was the truth; but it was also one of which he was not sorry to avail himself, as an excuse to decline sealing an engagement into which he more than half felt that he had been entrapped, and which nothing but a sense of honour, nicer than might have been expected from a person of his ductile character, prevented his breaking off. The vanity of Julia, however, which was as great as her cunning, hindered her from seeing this; and while she bitterly bewailed the want of fortune in herself and her lover, she as bitterly hated those who possessed that very necessary essential to matrimonial comfort. Satan himself, when first he caught sight of Adam and Eve in Paradise, felt, perhaps, scarcely less of envy and malevolence than agitated the heart of Julia Barton, as, under pretence of seeking a book, she abruptly entered the drawing-room in which Lord Alverston and Emily were sitting.

It was not that Julia thought that the Earl had made that declaration of attachment to Emily, which she had told her aunt it was part of her design that he should make; but it was his respectful, no less than his devoted air, as he leaned with Emily over a volume of Ariosto, from which he

had been reading. The glow of enthusiasm which lighted up the dark eyes of Emily, and touched her fair pale cheek with the delicate pink of the Indian shell, awakened its worst of envy in the cankered heart of her cousin.

"There is no poverty to hinder *their* marriage!" was the thought that rose in Julia's mind. But she said, in a tone that, in spite of herself, was sneering and bitter, "What! are you reading Italian? Is it Dante, the story of Rimini, that you talk so much about, Emily? Dear me, how pretty and romantic! You might pass for 'Francesca,' and the Earl for 'Paolo:' would not that be a grand idea for a *tableau vivant*? Aunt and Laura were talking of having some!"

"You quite mistake, Julia," answered Emily, quietly, "they are not in Dante, but Ariosto, some passages which the Earl has favoured me by reading this morning."

To this explanation, Emily might have added, if she had been as spiteful as her cousin, that she was not always talking of the lovers of Rimini, but had related their story a few days before, at the request and for the information of the very illiterate Julia herself.

Persons of a free and generous mind are not well fitted to cope with a mean or malignant one. Julia walked off, very well satisfied that, in spite of her cool reply, she had confused Emily, by placing her and Lord Alverston in the position of lovers; and she noted, too, how the brow of the Earl himself flushed, even through the clear olive of his complexion.

"Ah," she muttered to herself, "it is all right: I have embarrassed her, and put his lordship on his guard; and he must either leave his attentions, or show, by their continuance, that the time is getting ripe for my plans!"

These reflections were made by Julia, just one month after the rencontre with the Earl of Alverston and her succeeding illness had made Emily Forester a guest in the house of her Aunt Danby.

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## CHAPTER VI.

"And jealousy, with rankling tooth  
That only gnaws the secret heart ;  
Or hard unkindness' altered eye,  
That mocked the tear is forced to flow." GRAY.

SUPERB as was the mansion-house, and noble as was the demesne of Elmwood, Mrs. Danby had exhibited a strong aversion to residing there since the period of Sir Matthew's death. She alleged, indeed, that the memory of her deceased relative and benefactor was but too painful to her in that place of his abode—an excuse for not assuming the dignity of a residence there, which her daughter laughed at as most absurdly romantic, and her niece Julia ascribed to some different motive. She indeed made no scruple of saying to her sister Caroline, "that she supposed the real reason of Aunt Danby's refusal to live at Elmwood was, that she almost thought she would see Sir Matthew's ghost there ; as, no doubt, after she had coaxed him to disinherit Emily, she worried the poor old man into his coffin, as she had previously worried her husband !"

Whatever might be the source of Mrs. Danby's repugnance to Elmwood, it was certain that no teazings or poutings of her daughter, or sly insinuations of her niece, would avail to make her take up her abode there ; a flying visit of a few days was all she ever made at Elmwood. She declared her intention of making Elmwood, and the estate thereunto belonging, the bridal dowry of her daughter, and Laura did not therefore grumble much, when she expended a considerable sum of ready money in the purchase of an elegant villa at Wimbledon, between which and her mansion in Belgrave Square she divided her residence during the spring and summer months.

Meanwhile, as Emily Forester regained her strength after her severe illness, the heavy winter weather began to give way to a warm and early spring ; and Mrs. Danby, whose apparent kindness and generosity was now such that it

almost shook Emily's long-conceived ill opinion of her, proposed that the young girl, with her mother and little brother, who had almost regained the use of his broken arm, should take up their abode at Holly Lodge, the name of the villa. This offer Emily refused, but was finally prevailed upon to accept a residence at a cottage which stood upon the boundary of the grounds of Holly Lodge, and the verge of the pretty copse called Wimbledon Wood. This cottage had originally been inhabited only by the gardener, whose employment was in the grounds of Holly Lodge, which, though pretty, did not afford constant employment to more than one man. The accommodations of this abode were therefore of a mean description; it had but four rooms, two on the ground floor, and two on the upper story.

The condition of these rooms, even when Emily and her aunt and cousins first paid a visit to Holly Lodge, was anything but inviting, but the exterior of the little habitation pleased her, with its rustic porch garlanded with China roses, now, in the beginning of April, just beginning to put forth their first tender shoots, and sheltered at the back by the copse, while in front it was divided only by its own small garden and a kind of green country lane from the demesne of Holly Lodge.

Mrs. Danby had been so apparently kind, since the illness of Emily and the accident to little Walter, that she had completely imposed even on Emily herself, who now stood in some sort self-accused of a bitter and revengeful spirit, for the kind of instinctive aversion with which she could not still help regarding her Aunt Danby. She accused herself, in this delusion, even of an ignoble pride, in the repugnance that she felt to owing anything like a pecuniary obligation to Mrs. Danby. It was in vain that she was told by her mother, and even by her own clear and cool head, against her impatient and indignant heart, that she had a moral right to at least a share of that fortune which Sir Matthew Forester had so often assured her should be wholly hers. *She could not help feeling pained and humiliated at becom-*

ing, as it were, an object of the charity of Mrs. Danby; and, in the bitterness of this feeling, she questioned herself too sharply, and feared that the base passion of envy had sprung from her poverty and disappointments. Surely, the severest pang for a generous soul is, when the falsehood and cruelty of the world make it doubt itself. And this was the pang for Emily Forester, when she was bewildered by her aunt's hypocrisy, and asked herself whether she had been living in a delusion? whether the fault was in her, or in that woman, whom she had so long deemed the cajoler of the weak Sir Matthew—the thief of her promised fortune, and the murderer, through privation and sorrow, of her beloved father? Emily fought valiantly, as a person of her noble temper will fight, even against the strongest conviction; and she forced herself, in a manner, to believe that Mrs. Danby was really kind—that her possession of Sir Matthew's fortune was a consequence of the old man's whims, and not of her selfish intrigues. Emily would not consent, however, to reside at Holly Lodge. If she thought it due to Mrs. Danby, and to her mother and brother's comfort, to accept from that lady the necessaries of life, she held a refusal of its luxuries as the no less just right of her own decent and honourable pride. So, at her request, workmen and upholsterers were sent into the gardener's cottage; the rooms were fresh plastered and papered, and then furnished, in a modest style, such as befitted a cottage of very unpretending gentility, with French bedsteads, and small mahogany tables, and cherry-wood chairs, and curtains of simple blue-and-white damask. Yet, for all the humble nature of its appointments, it really looked very pretty when they were completed; for, the elegant taste and habits of Emily peeped out, in spite of herself, in the little white China vases filled with spring flowers on the mantel-piece of the parlour, into which one of the lower apartments had been converted, and the books, English, French, and Italian, ranged, for lack of a bookcase, on some ornamental shelves, or the *character of the music lying open on the cottage piano—those old-*



fashioned but very enchanting compositions of Handel, and Haydn, and Mozart, which Emily perversely preferred to all the uproar of sounds, and the rattling of keys, that Jullien, Hertz, or Thalberg ever invented.

For the first three weeks of her residence with her mother and little Walter, at this cottage, Emily really felt happy; far happier than she had yet hoped to be since the death of her father, the remembrance of whose sufferings was now, perhaps, even the more painful, that Emily feared their extremity had been indeed caused by a somewhat unjust resentment against Mrs. Danby. Her mother's and her own health seemed to improve—little Walter was getting quite well—they had all those solid domestic comforts of a warm and neatly-furnished home, a sufficient table, and neat apparel, the value of which can only be truly estimated by their loss. The prettiest little garden surrounded their house, and Emily and Walter were never weary of tending this garden, setting seeds for the gay sweet-pea, larkspur, and lupin, or planting pipings of the stock-gilliflower and fragrant carnation. Emily was passionately fond of flowers, and, for the adornment of her little parlour window, there came, a week after her mother and herself had taken possession of the cottage, two most magnificent camellias, a white and a red one. There could not have been a more acceptable present for Emily than those flowers; she thought of nothing else that evening. A dozen times, at least, even after the candles were lighted, did she repair to the window, to admire their delicate waxen petals, and smooth laurel-like foliage. Perhaps she did not admire them less, that they were a present from the Earl of Alverston, who had forwarded with them a note, entreating permission to wait on Miss Forester the next day.

Little Walter and Mrs. Forester had heard a great deal about the Earl, though they had never seen him, and the boy, like most boys, was very curious to know how many fine houses and parks the Earl had, and how many horses, and, above all, whether they were fine, beautiful

horses, milk-white, or black, or dappled gray, as the old songs and story-books describe horses. Mrs. Forester talked neither of horses, nor houses, nor lands; but she questioned Emily as to the Earl's manners and personal appearance, and asked whether she thought he was so much in love with Laura Danby: and then, when the young girl blushed and hesitated, the fond but shrewd mother was silent, and passed her own thin, white hand caressingly over the smoothly-braided chesnut hair of her daughter, and sighed and smiled together, as she thought how much more her poor, unprotected child "wanted a husband," than the rich Laura, who, with her money, could at any time purchase a husband good enough for her. Then Mrs. Forester recollected that the Danbys were not resident at Holly Lodge, and that they were, in all probability, ignorant of the Earl's intended visit, a circumstance whereat Mrs. Forester was greatly pleased.

The very skies were propitious for the Earl's first visit to the Foresters, which was made on the brightest of spring mornings, when the yellow crocuses flaunted in a sun-beam as bright as their own bosoms, and the snow-drops trembled in the softest zephyr, as it rushed over their delicate bosoms, laden with the fragrance it had stolen from a bed of violets. Emily and her little brother were up almost as soon as the sun-beams, and breakfast was taken in the kitchen, that the parlour might be kept in perfect order for the expected guest; the camellias were placed in the window-seat, and the little vases on the mantelpiece were filled with the humble flowers furnished by the garden; and long before the hour of the Earl's arrival, Walter was seated in his seat, with his tall coat neatly fastened in a silk waistcoat, and sitting in a chair, with his mother's feet, in the most elegant and comfortable dress, manufactured by his mother and sister. Emily, who had passed the week in the most narrow circumstances, and had been of late, in the bills of the milliner and dressmaker,

Mrs. Forester had now been a long time, in the same manner,

spite of years, and sickness, and sorrow, she was still a lady-like and interesting one, whose gentleness of manner charmed Lord Alverston the more, from its contrast to the air *prononcée* of Mrs. Danby; that air which, of all others, makes a woman detestable. But Mrs. Forester was one of those persons whose temper is sweet and quiet during even a moderate allowance of domestic comfort, but which presently becomes ruffled amid the rocks and shoals of severe pecuniary distress. Thus, during the worst access of their misfortunes, Mrs. Forester had been peevish and irritable, and heavily increased the suffering of Emily. Now that the generosity or craft of her sister-in-law had again placed her in a position of tolerable comfort, her spirits revived, and her temper became more equable. Thus it was that Lord Alverston supposed Mrs. Forester to be quite as amiable, if not so highly gifted, as he had previously found her daughter; while, as little Walter was both an intelligent and beautiful boy, there was not for Emily any drawback upon the Earl's most favourable thoughts, on account of her connections. In the end, Lord Alverston found himself so much better entertained in the little parlour of that humble cottage than he had been in the drawing-rooms of more than one duchess, that he made daily visits there for above a fortnight, and at last an evening visit to Emily alone. A very fine, fair, spring evening that was—as fine as the morning of the Earl's first call at the cottage; but it might have blown a winter gale, and beat hail, rain, and snow against the casement all at once, for aught that either he or Emily would have known of anything without the walls of that little parlour, or beyond the subject of their own conversation. As interesting as it was to themselves though, the conversation between the Earl and Emily would have been very dull to other people; for not even the manly frankness and generosity of an offer of marriage from a man in Lord Alverston's position, to a girl whose merits, personal and mental, were her only recommendation, could *relieve the converse of lovers from its sameness.*

When kissing her mother with tears of joy that night, Emily said that she felt herself only too happy. She should indeed have feared her good fortune; the sudden promise of a change from the depths of distress to the height of worldly prosperity, a marriage with a man young, handsome and high-principled, whom she would have loved, had he been as poor as herself, and who so nobly proved the extent of his love for her, by raising her to so exalted a station. Oh, poor Emily, you were indeed too happy. The love of Lord Alverston was, for you, the emerald ring of Polycrates. You should have looked for some dire evil at the hand of Fate, after she had presented you with so rich a treasure.

Mrs. Danby, with her daughter, accompanied by the Bartons, had come to reside a month or two at Holly Lodge, the day before the Earl proposed to Emily. Their presence at the Lodge perhaps a little hastened that proposal, for he loved Emily so much, that he was to the highest degree sensitive respecting her good name; and he had perceived so much of the designs and character of Mrs. Danby, that he resolved she should be under no mistake respecting her daughter. A motive of delicacy would have prevented Emily informing her relatives, prematurely, of the promised change in her prospects, but her mother could not restrain her exultation, and boasted of it to Julia on the first visit which she paid to the cottage. Miss Barton, who had expected this announcement, and had indeed schemed in Emily's favour, to make her disappointment the more bitter in the end, congratulated the latter with such apparent sincerity, that both she and Mrs. Forester were deceived, though they would not agree with Julia's assertion, that the heart of Laura would suffer from the Earl's preference for Emily, or admit that her expectations with regard to him had ever a better foundation than her own vanity.

Mrs. Danby raved when Julia took this news home to the Lodge, and Laura too, for her vanity was wounded, if not her love. Julia, on her part, laughed at their anger, and told *them that the Earl's proposal to Emily should ultimately*

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secure his coronet for Laura, as, instead of the young ladies of his own rank, with their arts and their charms, backed by their intriguing mothers, there was only one poor, forlorn, destitute girl to defeat. The confidence with which Julia spoke, finally raised the spirits of Mrs. Danby and her daughter, and they even called to their assistance a sufficient amount of hypocrisy to walk over to the cottage, and treat Emily to some kisses, the style of which Judas might have envied; while they playfully congratulated her, and said, "that, after all, she was a naughty girl, and not quite fair to Laura, who might, perhaps, have broken her heart; for the Earl really was a sad deceiver, and had paid her more attention than Emily was aware of."

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## CHAPTER VII.

"Sullen his eye, but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion!"

MILTON.

THERE certainly is, at times, a kind of malevolence in fortune, to favour, even beyond their own expectation, the designs of bad people; and thus it was unhappily for Emily, with regard to the schemes of Julia Barton, which were aided by adventitious circumstances, even beyond her utmost hopes.

It was a custom with Emily to rise at an early hour, and either practice or read till breakfast-time, or, if the weather would permit, take a walk. In those walks she was generally accompanied by little Walter.

The vicinity to London, and populous state of the neighbourhood, would have prevented a person of even less courage than Emily from apprehending anything like danger, in these almost solitary rambles, which she sometimes extended to a couple of miles beyond the cottage; and though she had been occasionally accosted by beggars, she *had never encountered any person whose appearance or manner could excite reasonable alarm.*

One unusually fine morning, however, when Emily sallied forth with her little brother, she was encountered near the gate of the cottage by a man wretchedly attired, and supporting himself on a crutch. A patch covered one of his eyes, the concealment of which perhaps only added to the sinister expression of the other, which, black and fierce, as well as cunning, glared most disagreeably from beneath the bushy, overhanging brow. The harshness, and even ugliness of the other features, was in no way relieved by the pallor of the skin, which might be attributed either to disease or want, as the bones seemed almost starting through it. The garments which hung about this miserable-looking object were literally in rags, and his whole appearance was so squalid and repulsive, that even Emily's charity was almost checked by the apprehension that, in so evil-looking a being, crime had in all probability been the source of misery. The man stood directly in her path, and as she past him, he extended his hand, and in a broken voice, not like the whine of a practised beggar, he implored assistance, protesting that he had not tasted food for two days. There was but too much reason, from his gaunt and haggard looks, to fear that this assertion was true, and Emily, from the natural tenderness and generosity of her disposition, not only drew forth her purse and presented him with what silver she could spare, but, turning back, desired the maid-servant to give him some beer and cold meat and bread. The poor wretch, who was in truth hungry, starving, ravenously devoured the food which was given to him, and, with an appearance of sensibility that belied his louring aspect, he demanded the name of his young benefactress. The servant, who was a girl of not more than sixteen years of age, immediately gave the required information, stating that Miss Emily was a niece of the great lady who lived at Holly Lodge, who had a mint of money, and a fine house in London, and another in the country, and a great estate. "Oh!" added the girl in conclusion, "there's many a titled lady not so rich as *Madam Danby*."

The beggar, who, while the girl was speaking, had raised a mug of beer to his lips, suddenly set it down. "What's that you say?" he demanded. "Is your young mistress a relation of the people at the big house just by? Well, if we may judge of the masters and mistresses by the manners of the servants, those people are not very kind to the poor, for when I asked one of the maids only for a penny or a morsel of bread, she told me that no beggars and impostors were encouraged there, and called to a footman to set the dogs on me. The dogs, forsooth! A murrain seize on them. They may come to the dogs themselves yet, an' they do not mend their ways."

"Oh, that is not likely!" answered the girl, "for Madam Danby has a power of money."

"Yes, yes, we know," responded the man, "ladies may have a deal of money, and their husbands may spend a deal more than they have got."

"Ah, but that lady, at Holly Lodge, is safe for that," said the servant, "for she is a widow."

"Doesn't follow as she'll remain one, this lady, Madam what-you-call-her—Danby, is it?" inquired the man, in a seemingly careless manner, as he rose somewhat abruptly.

"Yes, Danby—Mrs. Danby," replied the girl, who thought that, in some way, the great wealth of the lady at Holly Lodge reflected an importance on her relations at the cottage, "and nobody thinks much as she'll marry. She's one of the wide-awakes, she is, else she wouldn't have been so rich, perhaps, and have got so much money, and her fine place down in the country."

"All very fine, my girl," said the beggar, as he left the cottage, "but, nevertheless, we may still say, 'all's well when it ends well!' and Mrs. Danby has not seen out her days yet; and no good ever came, in the end, to the hard-hearted, or of setting dogs on starving men. If you live a little longer, you'll learn that, my lass."

"That's partly true, I do think," said the girl, as she returned to her work, after watching the beggar hobble away with the assistance of his crutch, till she lost sight of

him among the trees; "everybody does say that Madam Danby is hard-hearted, and that, by rights, all the money she has got ought to have been Miss Emily's. Howsomer, that won't matter much, when Miss is married to that fine lord as comes here so often, and who, anybody may see, is quite over head and ears in love with her!"

While little Jenny, the maid, bustled about her morning's work, and indulged in these philosophic reflections, the beggar, whose remarks had occasioned them, paused on the confines of the copse, and looked back to see if his movements could be discovered in the vicinity of the cottage. A leafy screen of hazels and alders, topped by the tall elm and beech, now, however, concealed the little building, and the beggar, dropping his crutch, sat down at the foot of one of the trees, and deliberated with himself half-aloud.

"I'faith!" he said, while a glow of exultation suffused his gaunt, pale face, and kindled, in his one eye, a sharper glare of malice, "I'faith, but I am a lucky fellow, after all. Who would have thought, when I left poor Ciss and the brat starving, this morning, that I should have dropt upon this chance to mend our fortune? How to get on, though, to speak on the quiet to this pretty, good-natured creature, and not let the Jezabel, her aunt, have a hint of the matter! It won't do, no how, to send a letter to the house, though Ciss could write one. That must be the second move. I must e'en loiter'about, till I see her again, and then speak a word to her. I suppose she has only gone with the little fellow for a bit of a walk, at this hour in the morning. I see'd her turn down this path in the copse. I'll just stroll a little way on, and take the chance to meet her."

In pursuance of this resolve, the beggar proceeded by the main path through the copse, which finally opened out upon the common; which, indeed, he reached before he again encountered Emily, who had been aiding little Walter to gather a large bunch of the white and yellow broom, and the harebell. The spot on which she now met the beggar was somewhat lonely, and the man's appearance was any-



thing but prepossessing. Slightly noticing his salutation, therefore, and grasping the child's hand more tightly, Emily was hurrying onward.

"Stay, stay, young lady!" then said the mendicant, in a tone so rough and loud, that it awakened all the fears of Emily, and defeated the purpose of the man, as, without replying, she only quickened her steps. The mendicant, on his part, pursued her with a speed that would not have been expected from his lameness. He would not, however, have overtaken her, but that, as she ran down the wide path of the copse, the nearest way to the cottage, her foot slipped upon the moist turf, and, though she was not hurt by the fall, it gave the advantage to the mendicant, who, firmly grasping her arm as she rose, said, with a sneer,

"What, are you afraid, eh? You foolish wench. You think, forsooth, that I am dangerous, because of my rags. You have more to fear from many who go clad in fine linen, and, if you will meet me here to-morrow night, after dusk, I shall show myself the best friend you ever had in your life!"

At this moment little Walter, who had hitherto stood trembling and terrified beside his sister, caught sight of his cousins, Julia and Laura, coming down the path, and, concluding that they had with them one of his aunt's servants, he ran to meet them with a cry of joy. The mendicant, too, caught sight of them, and, tightening his hold on Emily's arm, he said,

"See, young lady, yonder comes your cousin, Miss Laura Danby. She is a bad enemy of yours, and I would be only your friend. Do, for your own sake, promise to meet me."

"Why should I do so? For what reason? Why cannot you tell me, at once, what you would have?" said Emily, who was startled in her refusal by the earnestness of the man's manner.

"I cannot tell you now, lady," said the mendicant, "because——" and here he bent his head, and almost reduced *his voice to a whisper*, for Julia and Laura were fast

approaching. The words he then uttered were, however, of such a purport, that Emily, overwhelmed by them, staggered back, and leaned, almost fainting, against a tree. "Ah!" said the man, "you will trust me now. You will meet me, I think, young lady? At any rate, I will wait for you at dusk to-morrow."

The beggar took great strides, with the assistance of his crutch, and had made some way towards the boundary of the copse, before Emily was joined by her cousins, to whom she said, merely, that the man had frightened her, but that she believed him innocent of any ill-intent.

"Ah!" said Julia, "you dear, romantic young ladies are always getting into some trouble or other; this is the consequence of your fine, solitary walks, late and early. Here is Laura taking up with them too. Who but she, to be sure, did I watch stealing away by the side entrance to the gardens this chilly April morning—who, but the fashionable Miss Laura Danby. No wonder she did not want aunt to know anything of such a strange whim; so you need not mention it, you know, Emily!"

Emily did not immediately reply to this speech, for she was absorbed, confounded, as it were, by the revelation which she had received in the few words of the mendicant; when, to change the subject of her surprise and meditation, Laura herself, seizing her arm, exclaimed, in a voice almost of agony,

"Why do you not answer, dear, dear Emily? You do not know how tyrannical and cruel mamma can be, even upon the most contemptible subjects. Do promise me, then, that you will not say anything about having caught me in this early walk, and take care that little Walter does not mention it."

"Pray, set your mind at rest, Laura," answered Emily, "and be sure that, whether in slight matters or great ones, I have enough to do with my own affairs, not to meddle with those of other people."

*Laura was much more profuse in her thanks for this*

assurance than the occasion seemed to demand, and before the day was out, she brought to the cottage an elegant piece of silver-gray brocade, for a new dress for Emily, and an expensive toy for little Walter, to whom, not quite to the approval either of his mother or sister, she gave a lesson of deceit, in making him promise not to tell his aunt that he had met her and Julia in the wood.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

"The world was not his friend, nor the world's law—  
Sharp misery had worn him to the bone!"

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE beauty of the morning, on which Emily encountered the mysterious mendicant, failed, as is common in the early spring, to herald a fine day. But perhaps the discomfort of the change, the cold and drizzling rain, the wind rushing round the corners of the streets, and sighing mournfully through the crevices of the ill-fitting doors and casements, was little felt by the outcasts of fortune. Those who knew not, when the day rose, how the day's wants were to be provided for—to whom the blessed light of morning was hateful, as a remembrancer, too soon, of the miseries of the coming day—the change in the atmosphere heightened not their misery! Oh, but it is a terrible condition that, of those who fear to look upon the day-beam, and fear it for their misfortunes, not their crimes; and feel that misfortune is punished worse than crime—that the bold, abandoned woman, and the dishonest man, may flaunt it openly in the face of day, while the poor and honest, who would work, honestly work, are driven from the pale of society—hunted, worse than savage beasts, because they have not the yellow dress, which is bought so often at so dear a cost—a cost they could not pay—of keen remorse and inward apprehensions.

*Yet it is bitter to want the necessities of life, and the*

most bitter drop in that bitter draught is in the consciousness that we have not deserved a lot so wretched—in the aching, hopeless envy, that will steal sometimes into the purest mind, when contrasting the condition of forlorn abandoned virtue with the apparent triumphs of the wicked.

In a miserable attic, in one of the wretched streets in the purlieus of St. Martin's Lane, on the morning when Emily Forester encountered the mendicant in Wimbledon Wood, a young but emaciated female lay stretched upon a pallet, composed only of straw, covered with a ragged patch-work counterpane. She had once been very fair, that poor creature, whose only clothing was a thin old petticoat, and a faded, tattered, cotton gown. The remains of a delicate, charming, English beauty, were yet observable in the outline of the small features; the still mild glance of the deep-blue eye, and the softness and rich colour of the golden hair, which, laden with the damps of sickness and starvation, strayed loosely from the brow over the wretched bundle of rags which formed the only pillow for the poor head. Despite the sickly yellow, which had usurped the place of the lily and the rose, in the once exquisite complexion—despite the sharp, haggard outline of the features, the meagre, wasted limbs, it was evident that forlorn creature had not yet passed what should have been the summer of life—was not more than twenty-three years of age. Alas, for those for whom life has no summer! Surely it is a moot point, whether the wretchedness of youth or age is the worst to bear. Poverty, with advanced years, is no doubt very dreadful; but, alas, there is a bitterness, a madness, in the misery of a blighted youth, which mocks the passive wretchedness of torpid age! It is so terrible, in the season of warm, glowing, enthusiastic, innocent youth, to be shut out, as it were, from youth's enjoyments—to be separated from humanity, bidden to have no share in its enjoyments, because the hand of hideous, loathsome poverty is laid upon us! Or worse, even, than this; to have united an unhappy destiny to another no less luckless—to see the object of the

purest, fondest love, grow hardened and corrupted by the unmerited hardships—the brazen, unmasked villany, which honesty and truth daily encounter! And, oh! climax of misery, to behold the offspring of that ill-fated love, the innocent, that the care of a prosperous mother would have clothed in cambric, and cradled on down, and curtained with silk, to behold that poor, feeble creature, perish of cold and want!

A pale, apparently dying infant, of from twelve to fourteen months old, was pressed to the bosom of the wretched young woman, the tenant of that miserable attic. The breath of the woman was heaved in long, uncertain gasps, her lips were parched and white; she was sinking from want of food; on the floor beside the pallet stood a broken pitcher containing water, and it was with difficulty that, towards mid-day, the faint and famished creature raised herself on her pallet and placed the vessel to her lips. Poor as was the beverage, the water revived her, and as she replaced the pitcher on the ground, she turned an anxious look on the babe at her side. Poor thing! it would have been a model of infantine beauty, had it been the child of rich parents; but its pellucid complexion had grown sickly like that of the wretched mother, and its round cherub cheeks had fallen in, and the large hazel eyes had in them an ominous brightness, as, roused by the movement of the luckless mother, it opened them and smiled, and nestled down in her bosom. There is nothing more sweet and interesting than a child from one to three years of age: the peevishness and dullness of the first months of infancy are past, and the little creature, if gifted with even common intelligence, begins to know and take notice of surrounding objects, and especially to turn with a glad recognition to the mother or the nurse.

“Oh! my poor boy, my sweet darling, dying, dying, and I have nothing but cold water to give thee!” sobbed the miserable mother, as she pressed the pallid infant to her bosom. “Oh!” she went on muttering to herself, as she rocked the pale infant on her bosom, “oh! if I had deserved

this, I think I could bear it better. But we have not deserved it. No, no, my poor Harry, if you did wrong, it was in ignorance, and because you were deceived by the most wicked wretch that ever wore a woman's shape. Alas, that I should say so of my own relation. But he was innocent, my Harry, and so was I, and I will remain so; I will die, knowing, blessed be the good God, that I have never willingly hurt a worm. But, oh! my poor Harry, he will not, he cannot, he does not bear this wretchedness with patience! But, O Lord, have mercy on him! visit him not for the sins into which he is beguiled by the wickedness of others! Alas, alas! where is he gone now? What a cold and miserable day it has become, and he has had no food for two days, poor fellow, and has gone out to try and get some for me and our boy. Well, let me be patient, his lot is worse than mine; if he had not married me, he had been a prosperous and happy man. Oh, my poor Harry, it was a wretched day for you on which we met!"

"Oh, la! it's mighty fine now, I dare say you thinks, that 'ere canting and whining," said a sharp female voice, as the door of the attic was thrown open, and a burly woman, of about fifty years of age, attired in gaudy finery, made her appearance. "It's mighty fine, to be sure, Mrs. Mills," said this woman, approaching the pallet, "to be going on a making speeches fit for a play-actress, about your wagabone of a husband, when I never sees the colour of a penny from him. But I tells you plainly what it is, if he does not bring home some money to me to-night, out you goes, sick or well, that's nothing to me. I am an honest woman, as pays my way, and can't afford to give lodgers rooms out of charity."

The poor sick and starving creature looked up at these words, and shivered, as she pressed her child closer to her bosom; she trembled at the violence of her landlady.

"Dear, good Mrs. Jenkins," she said, "do but be patient, and you shall have some money; my husband will not come home without, I am sure."

"And I should like to be sure as he'll get some!" answered the landlady, "and would like to know in what way; begging, or stealing, I suppose; not, to be sure, that matters to me, Mrs. Mills; all I wants is my money, and if so be you gets it for me, there's an end to the matter. I shall not ask you how you comes by it; but I do tell you this, once for all, I am not a-going to be shabbed off any longer; you are not a-going to live in this here furnished room for nothing."

The unfortunate lodger was too spirit-broken, too much spent for want of food, to repel this brutality, else she might have answered, that the wretched attic, which only contained a deal table and a couple of chairs, could not justly be called a furnished room. She did, however, venture to remind her landlady, that she had a fortnight back taken away even the poor bed, of which her lodgers had originally the use.

"Aye, aye," answered the landlady, "and reason enough that I should take it away; it was enough to trust such beggars with the bare walls of a room."

"Come, stop this, stop this!" said the rough voice of a man, as the door was thrown open, and the mendicant, who had addressed Emily Forester in the wood at Wimbledon, made his appearance. "Stop this, you infernal old haridan," he repeated, turning on the landlady, with a look and accent as savage as her own. "Is not the poor wench starving—dying? There, hag as you are, there is a sovereign; take out of it the ten paltry shillings we owe you, and go and get some brandy, and some mutton to make a little broth. Oh!" and here the man garnished his speech with an oath, "you needn't look so nice; it is good money, fresh from the mint, and I have not stolen it either!"

The woman took the money with a smiling air, and her manner instantaneously changed from a brutal insolence to fawning servility. There is not much hypocrisy about London lodginghouse-keepers, whether they let apartments *in the neighbourhood* of Cavendish Square, or, as Mrs. Jenkins did, in the purlicus of St. Martin's Lane. They

contrive, with equal candour, to teach their lodgers that their civility is an article entirely purchasable.

"Lors, Mr. Mills," said the woman, as she turned the gold over, "you are always so funny, to think as I should suppose that you stole money!"

"Thee wouldn't care if I did, thee old jade; so get out and buy the mutton, and lay up your account with being civil to my lass here for the future; 'cause you see, old woman, that impudence won't go down with them that has the dibbs!"

This speech was made by Mills, in a tone, and with a manner, quite as brutal as that which the landlady herself so lately employed, but the air of affected jocoseness with which she smiled, and courtesied herself out of the room, showed, at the least, that she and her lodger were exceedingly well matched.

The poor young woman, meanwhile, feebly raised herself on her pallet, as the landlady closed the door, and, fixing her eyes with a piteous expression on her husband's face, she exclaimed, in a hollow trembling voice, "Oh, Harry, do not jest so with that dreadful woman. How did you come by that money? Oh, surely, the vile wretches you have been among lately have not won you to join them, and steal?"

"Steal, Ciss!" answered the man, laughing. "Do not make a fool of thyself. No, no, I have not been stealing, unless thee calls it so, to get a little back out of the money which that old rascal, Josiah Teal, cheated me of in his smuggling transactions."

"Oh, Harry! Harry!" answered the woman, "do not tell me that. Don't say that you have any more dealings with that old man; who, you have sworn to me, was the first to put you in the way of all the bad, vile wretches you have known!"

"Now, do not frighten thyself for that, Ciss!" replied the man; "but, remember, if it had not been for that very old fellow, Teal, I should never have known the chap who introduced me to thy aunt, and so never have known thee, my pretty one!"



"And better, perhaps, for both of us, if you never had known me, Harry," said the woman; "for it was with the money that was to set us up in house-keeping, forsooth, that they tempted you into that wicked deed, for which, I believe in my heart, a judgment has hung over us, that has made all our ventures fail, and brought us at last to the plight that we are now in! Oh, it was a woeful day, a woeful day, when we first met, and when you meddled with ill-gotten gains!"

As the poor wretch spoke thus, she wept, and wrung her thin hands, while the man stood by, with his harsh, repulsive features softening with an expression of tenderness and sorrow, of which, at a first glance, they might have been thought incapable.

"Patience, my dear Cicely," he said, "and we shall have good times yet!"

"Good times!" ejaculated the woman! "Oh, yes, it looks like it. And you look like it—lamed of a leg, and with one of your eyes almost beaten out, in your drunken brawls!"

"For all that, Ciss," answered the man, "we will yet have good times, and may fairly look for them, when we do a good deed to make up for the bad ones."

"Yes!" replied the woman, bitterly, "if the one bad deed might be amended. But, that cannot be!"

"Don't be too sure of that, though," answered Mills. "If we cannot make up for what has been done, altogether, we may do something in that way. What would you say, now, if I were to tell you that, this morning, when, for the first time in my life, I made up my mind to beg, the first person that gave me help was Miss Emily Forester?"

"Say?" retorted the woman. "Why, that such a deed was like the good, sweet creature that she always was; and that I should like to know how it was you came to meet her."

"Why, she is living near to her Aunt Danby," answered the man, "and, I believe, on good terms with her too!"

"On good terms!" said the woman. "The lamb may be on good terms with the wolf next! Oh, Harry, my dear,

husband, I would give anything, suffer anything, if I could but see that vile, cruel, ungrateful woman punished. But, no, there is no hope of that. It seems to me there is no punishment for the great thieves of the world, only the little ones. I should have been sent to prison, if I had taken a loaf to keep myself and my child from starving; but Madam Danby, who has robbed her own niece of thousands, and done worse too, much worse, she is to be dressed in satins and silks, and ride in a carriage. Oh, I have no patience! There is no justice in this world!"

"Not much, I am afraid, Ciss," said the man; "but there's something nearly as good, and that's revenge. And when I tell you, that Miss Emily Forester has promised to meet me to-morrow evening, and that, after I had left her, and was coming home to get a bit of dinner with the silver she was so kind as to give me, I stumbled on old Teal, who has got a good and safe job for me on hand, I hope you will not doubt that, if Madam Danby and two or three more don't get justice, they will have a taste more than they will like of revenge!"

"It won't be revenge, nothing that pulls down that bad woman!" said Cicely, passionately, for she seemed to lose all the mildness of her character when speaking of Mrs. Danby. "No, it won't be revenge: it will be justice. And I will hope, indeed, for better days, Harry, if you can come at her!"

"And I will come at her, be sure of that, Ciss," said the man. "So now, we will have a fire, and a good dinner; and, after that, I will go out and get you some clothes, and see for a better lodging."

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## CHAPTER IX.

" 'Tis slander,  
Whose edge is sharper than the sword ; whose tongue  
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile ; whose breath  
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie  
All corners of the world."

CYMBELINE.

THE day on which the man Mills had, in his venture as a mendicant, introduced himself to Emily Forester, passed away not unpleasantly for her. In the morning, and before the change which afterwards took place in the weather, the Earl brought down, to introduce to her, Mrs. Trevelyan, the wife of that friend whom he had been visiting on the night of his own first interference in behalf of Emily, when she was molested by Captain Seymour.

The husband of Clara Trevelyan, the younger son of an ancient family in Cornwall, had married her very imprudently ; for her circumstances were as poor as those of Emily Forester, and even more desolate, since she had no near relation in the world, having been left an orphan, without brothers or sisters, at the age of eighteen. From that time till she was three-and-twenty, when she became the wife of Mr. Trevelyan, she had supported herself in the laborious and humiliating position of a private governess. It was, as before said, very imprudent in Mr. Trevelyan to suffer himself to be so much charmed by the beauty and amiable qualities of Clara, since she had no money, and he had very little ; for, though his family were wealthy, the fortune of a younger son must always be indifferent ; and, to make the matter worse, his father had always made up his mind, that the good looks and pleasant manners of his younger son would amend his fortunes in the way of marriage, and, to accomplish this desired end, had negotiated, in his favour, with the relations of an orphan heiress of the same county—this heiress being, to exasperate still

more the anger of the old squire, a girl of passable good looks, and not unamiable temper.

"If, according to the fashion of a crusty, tyrannical old father in a novel," said the squire, "I had looked out for an old, ugly, ill-tempered woman, and commanded Edmund to marry her because she was rich, there would have been some excuse for his flying to the opposite extreme, and marrying a handsome woman without a shilling. But Alice Vivian is neither old nor ugly; she is a young girl, and a pretty girl, and a good girl too. The only merit of this Miss Clara Moreland is her poverty; and, by Jove, master Edmund shall learn what manner of merit that is. I'll stop his allowance!—he shall see how he can live upon love! It will not be quite such substantial fare as he has been accustomed to, I imagine!"

In this supposition the rough and tough old squire was, indeed, very correct; and when the two hundred pounds which Edmund had when he married was expended in two months—for he would not at first live in a style at all suited to his finances—both he and poor Clara began to find that love was really too ethereal a diet to subsist upon, without some grosser fare. Happily, however, for both, and especially so for Clara, a friend appeared for Trevelyan, in the person of Lord Alverston, ere the bitter hour arrived which comes so soon\* for so many—that hour, when the gnawing, envenomed fang of real poverty—the irritation caused by brutal creditors, a scanty wardrobe, and an insufficient table, dissipates the dream of youthful imagination, and proves too sensibly that love is not imperishable. Most happily for Clara, this cruel consequence of poverty was averted by the generous friendship of Lord Alverston; most happily, because she was the party in whose behalf the sacrifice had been made, and because men in general sooner grow weary of physical deprivations than women. And it might have been that, under the pressure of real want, Trevelyan would have learned to regret having violated his father's commands, and *to think that Alice Vivian bore as fair a face as that of the*

woman, to share whose poverty he had rejected her. The Earl of Alverston, like a guardian angel of love and happiness, then, first forced upon Trevelyan a sum of money sufficient to release him from embarrassment, and then procured for him a government employment of about eight hundred a year; so that Trevelyan, who was neither selfish nor luxurious, was still content with his own choice of a wife, and did not regret not having been directed by his father.

Mrs. Trevelyan was really a very amiable and pleasing woman; and as, in the enthusiasm of her gratitude to the Earl, she made Emily fully acquainted with his kindness, the similarity of their positions at once awakened in each an interest towards the other. The morning, therefore, passed very agreeably; and when Laura Danby called, she obtained from Mrs. Trevelyan a promise that she would accompany Emily to an early and quiet dinner at Holly Lodge.

Between the grounds of the Lodge and the cottage there was, as before said, only a green kind of country lane; and as the sun had again broken out after the rain, the two ladies, wrapped in their shawls, preferred walking through the garden to accepting the use of the carriage, which Laura had proffered to send. As they issued from the little garden of the cottage, a gentleman in a military undress hastened forward to meet them, and Emily, to her surprise and even terror, recognised Captain Seymour; while he, on his part, paused, and after looking in a hesitating manner at Mrs. Trevelyan, muttered something about not wishing to intrude on Miss Forester, and, bowing to both the ladies, turned upon his heel. His vexed and disappointed air, however, together with the familiar tone in which he addressed Emily, clearly gave Mrs. Trevelyan to understand that she was in the way; indeed she would have surmised the Captain to be some lover of Emily, in waiting in the lane by her own appointment, had she not heard from the Earl the day before that his proposals had been accepted by Miss Forester. She concluded, therefore, that the Captain was some friend or family connection, who had affairs of private import on

which he wished to speak with Emily, and therefore said; "Dear Miss Forester, do not let me frighten your friends away; that gentleman evidently wishes to speak with you, will you not call him back?"

"Oh, dear madam, no!" answered Emily; "he has been the source of nothing but trouble and distress to me. He is Captain Seymour, who so molested me on the night that Walter broke his arm. It was from his rudeness that the Earl rescued me. His presumption is unequalled, or he would not have presumed to address me as he did this moment. Had he the least feeling of a real gentleman, he would forbear to intrude himself on a person by whom he has been repulsed as he has been by me!"

This explanation was given by Emily, as she passed with Mrs. Trevelyan through the grounds of Holly Lodge; nor did she expect to hear the name of her importunate admirer from her cousins. Scarcely, however, had the Earl, who had promised to look in at Mrs. Danby's in the course of the evening, arrived, than Caroline Barton came up to the sofa where Emily was seated, chatting with Mrs. Price, who was staying for a few days at the Lodge, and holding up her hands with an affected air of rebuke, exclaimed,

"Oh, Emily, what a naughty, naughty girl you are!"

Emily was too well acquainted with the malice of her cousin to suppose that this sage remark was the prelude to any very harmless or innocent jest; and therefore, with some gravity, replied, that she should be glad to know how she had offended?

"Oh, against all honest rules, you wicked, wicked girl! Indeed, Emily, you are quite too bad. Poor Captain Seymour, he is a naughty man, we know; but indeed you punish him too much!"

"I am at a loss to understand you, Caroline," said Emily, with some warmth, while the Earl looked grave and uneasy, and Laura Danby tittered. Emily went on: "You know enough, Caroline, of the annoyances I have endured from Captain Seymour, to be aware that his name is not with me

a proper topic for jesting. I have not till this evening seen the gentleman, if I must give him an appellation which he so ill deserves, since Lord Alverston, some months back, rescued me from his rudeness."

"Oh, then, you have seen him this evening?" said Caroline, giggling.

"I saw him as I left home in company with Mrs. Trevelyan," answered Emily; "he was apparently loitering in the lane, for what purpose I cannot tell, unless it was to occasion annoyance to me. But there is enough of this, I think. I do not know why the affronts I have experienced from Captain Seymour are to be made a topic of discussion. I think more worthy, as well as more delicate objects of conversation, might easily be chosen."

"I think so too, my dear," said Mrs. Price, now interfering in the conversation, with her sharp imperative tones; for, with all her faults she was not censorious, and most honestly believed that Emily felt all the aversion to Captain Seymour that she never failed to express. "I think so, too; and I must tell you, Miss Caroline, that it does you no credit to choose such a subject for jesting. If that worthless coxcomb is loitering about this neighbourhood, it is no doubt with a view to create for Miss Forester some fresh trouble; and it would become her friends better to think of how they should teach him to keep his distance, than to make a joke of his impertinence. And that is what real friends would do. But real friends are not to be met with every day; and Miss Emily may be thankful that she has, at any rate, one person of such consequence to take her part now, that all the sly, spiteful creatures will be glad, sooner or later, to hold their tongues."

As Mrs. Price spoke thus, she looked significantly towards the Earl, who, however, noticed neither the look nor the words that accompanied it, engaged as he was in questioning Mrs. Trevelyan respecting the demeanour of Captain Seymour. Caroline, on her part, affected to be overcome by the sharp manner of Mrs. Price, and put her handkerchief to *her eyes*, while Julia came forward, with an air of the utmost

candour and simplicity, to inquire what was the matter, accompanied by her Aunt Danby and Laura, who were the only other persons present.

"I cannot bear it, my dear Julia, indeed I cannot," said Caroline, sobbing; "Mrs. Price says such ill-natured things, and forms such strange conclusions. I am sure it is no more my fault than Emily's, if Captain Seymour will come day after day and saunter about the cottage; or if you and Laura saw him stealing along the lane last night, after you parted with Emily at the garden gate. It seems to me the drollest thing in the world for a man to persist, as he does, in dangling after Emily, who says she hates him and has affronted him so often. And as to friends, of course Mrs. Price must think I am very dull not to understand her insinuations upon that point; but it would be hard for Emily to find better friends than you and I have been, Julia."

This speech was delivered by Miss Caroline with a rapidity of utterance that forbade interruption, and a loudness of tone that was more energetic than polite. Not a very favourable specimen did the manners of either the Danbys or the Bartons furnish of Emily's connections to the Earl—accustomed as he was to the *maintien*, the polished coolness of fashionable life. But he was very much in love—and love, for once in a way, was on the side of reason, and assured him that the coarseness and vulgarity of kinswomen, whose acquaintance might easily be shaken off, in no way deteriorated from the refinement and elegance of Emily herself. Beyond this, Caroline Barton was not only ill-tempered and violent to the point of vulgarity, but she had such a sufficient share of her sister's craft, that had she surmised that the grossness of her manner would disgust the Earl with Emily and her connections, she would, therefore, the more unrestrainedly have indulged it.

Julia remained superlatively cool. It did not consist with her plans to exhibit any violence whatever; and she reserved a private rebuke for Caroline, whom she had herself destined for Emily's rival, and whose display of temper she was aware



would scarce recommend her for the position of Countess of Alverston.

"My dear Caroline," she said, "now do not excite yourself so; pray, do not. You know how weak your nerves are, and that you suffer so much if you excite yourself, and I am sure you wrong dear Mrs. Price. Of course, she could not think you were to blame, or not Emily's friend, because you were jesting about Captain Seymour. If you had been sly and spiteful, you would not have jested so openly. But don't do it again, love: it is unpleasant, no doubt, to poor Emily. Of course, she cannot tell the Captain that he shall not walk about the Queen's highways, if he chooses; and so, if he will loiter near the cottage, without any encouragement from her, she cannot help it!"

"Psha, bah!" ejaculated Mrs. Price, "all mighty fine, Miss Julia, mighty fine. I am a plain-spoken woman, and what I think, I say; and I say, that if I were Miss Forester or the Earl of Alverston, you and your sister should speak out, too, and say what you mean about Captain Seymour!"

"Mean? La, Mrs. Price! what a strange woman you are!" said Julia. "Why, what should we mean?"

"Why," retorted Mrs. Price, "that Captain Seymour does not lurk about Wimbledon for nothing, and that, in spite of all your cousin says, she does encourage him. There, Miss, that's what you mean, you and your sister too. And now you have got my mind upon that subject; and you will have it on a few more that you'll like as little, if you don't take care!"

The feelings of Emily during this altercation between her cousins and Mrs. Price may be more readily imagined than described. She had sunk upon a sofa, and vainly endeavoured, more than once, to interpose. In their eagerness and expressions of mutual dislike, neither Mrs. Price nor the Bartons would be interrupted, while poor Emily, almost overcome with mingled shame and anger, grew red and pale *by turns*. Though superlatively so to her, the scene was

indeed painful to all concerned in it. Mrs. Price had become really angry. The Earl, with his nice feelings of honour and pride, wounded to the quick, stood somewhat apart, with perhaps the first scintillation of jealous suspicion darting athwart his mind, while Mrs. Trevelyan, after hastily whispering to him, that she agreed entirely with Mrs. Price, approached Emily, and endeavoured to support her. The Bartons, too, were uneasy. Julia was not so cool as she expected to be, in playing the first stroke of her game against Emily, and Caroline was as much irritated as she appeared, while Mrs. Danby and Laura had their nervous feelings too. They, like Julia, however, bore out the matter bravely, and when Mrs. Price expressed herself in so free a tone, Mrs. Danby felt it incumbent on her to take part with the niece, who was so disinterestedly incurring so tart a rebuke on behalf of Laura.

"Indeed then, my dear Mrs. Price," she said, "I must speak what you call plainly as well as yourself. I really cannot detect, in anything that Julia or Caroline have said, such unkind insinuations against Emily as you accuse them of. It was foolish of Caroline, certainly, to jest about Captain Seymour, as she must have been sure that Emily must be annoyed at his being so much in the neighbourhood."

"Miss Forester," said the Earl, now advancing, "were you aware that Captain Seymour has been, as these ladies assert, for some days loitering in the neighbourhood?"

"No, my lord!" answered Emily, with recovered spirits; for not only did she feel, with Mrs. Price, that her cousins had designed, by their insinuations, to reflect upon her conduct; but with that conviction came another, that either the young ladies falsely asserted that they had seen Captain Seymour in the neighbourhood, or that his appearance there was the result of some communication with them. A foregone experience, of late too much neglected, of the base and bitter dispositions of these women, justified this belief in Emily, while it roused in her the spirit of resistance.

"No, my lord!" she repeated. "Since the night when you kindly rescued me from his impertinence, I have not seen Captain Seymour till this afternoon, when, as Mrs. Trevelyan will tell you, he was loitering near the cottage. He would have spoken to me, I believe, had I been alone; and I was too thankful that Mrs. Trevelyan's society preserved me from his molestations. I acknowledge, also, my lord, that if my cousins had not mentioned Captain Seymour, I should not have done so; for I had a woman's fear of embroiling you with a man who merits not even the distinction of your anger. And I feel it due to myself to add, that neither the Misses Barton, nor Miss Danby, have made known to me, before this evening, that they had seen Captain Seymour."

"I can make full allowances for your feminine fears, Emily," said the Earl, "but you must allow me to say that they were unjust to me, and more so to yourself, and might have given a colour to the jests of your cousins, which possibly the young ladies themselves did not design. Since, however, if I understand Miss Julia rightly, this terrible Captain haunts your dwelling by night and by day, I will, if you please, at once escort you home, and Mrs. Trevelyan will no doubt accompany you, as my carriage will take her to town."

Mrs. Danby, who apprehended that the manœuvre of the Bartons had rather compromised them than Emily in the opinion of the Earl, now interposed, with many entreaties that he would not deprive them of the society of Emily and Mrs. Trevelyan so early in the evening; but his lordship, like the lords of the creation in general, could be sufficiently obstinate in his resolves. Besides that, as the one fault of his otherwise estimable character was a disposition to jealousy, the arrows of Julia Barton had so far reached their aim that, in spite of himself, he felt suspicious and angry, and very much inclined to vent his spleen on the lady cousins of Emily, since, from the candour of her explanations, he had no fair plea for exhibiting it towards herself;

and therefore, purely to spite the Danbys and Bartons, he would take Emily and Mrs. Trevelyan away, only, before his departure, expressing a hope that he should soon see Mrs. Price as a guest at Alverston.

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## CHAPTER X.

"Thus do I ever make my fool my purse!"

OTHELIA.

THE Earl of Alverston had no sooner withdrawn, than Julia Barton, answering with a few words of insolent retort the triumph and reproofs of Mrs. Price, hurried out of the room, and ungenerously left her sister, aunt, and cousin to do battle against the old lady, who was more than a match for all three; and who, finally, ordered her carriage and withdrew in high indignation, protesting that she would never darken Mrs. Danby's doors again; and foretelling that her pride and wickedness, "aye, wickedness," she said, with great vehemence, "would have a fall." Julia, meanwhile, concerned herself but little with the anger of Mrs. Price, but as she heard carriage-wheels upon the sweep before the house, which her chamber-window overlooked, she peeped through the blind, and perceiving that Mrs. Price's brougham had drawn up, muttered to herself,

"Humph! so the old woman is going away in a passion! So much the better. I did not want her here for days together; she is much too sharp, and an acquaintance, in short, that my Aunt Danby would be well rid of. I shall have her dismissed from the visiting-list. I shall tell Mrs. Danby so to-morrow. She will not murmur at any command of mine now, I think; neither shall Miss Laura, after to-night. Poor things! I shall govern them a little, but the rod will not be quite made of iron after all, or, at least, their wealth can cover it with roses. And if they will plot and plan, and be withal so dreadfully incautious and stupid,"

must take the consequences. I am sure, whatever I get from them I work hard enough for, in saving them from the results of their own folly!" As she soliloquised thus, Julia took from a drawer a superb Cashmere shawl, which had been a great favourite of Mrs. Danby's, and which, for that very reason, Julia had intimated a desire to possess; and as, for some potent reason or other, her will for the last few weeks had been a law with her aunt, the shawl was accordingly resigned to her.

Wrapped in this shawl, and with a close straw bonnet and veil upon her head, Julia now stole into Laura's room, and slipped down a back staircase that communicated with the gardens. Though the stars were thickly sown upon an unclouded sky, there was no moon; and the stillness and obscurity, even within the gardens, was somewhat dismal, and might have overcome stronger nerves than those of Julia, who, when not engaged in the prosecution of some vile scheme, was as cowardly as any of her sex. The courage of fraud and malice, however, she possessed in an eminent degree, and the ghostly whispering of the wind among the branches, the mists, and darkness of the night did not startle her, as she threaded her way swiftly through the winding paths of the garden, till she reached a door, of which Laura and Mrs. Danby alone possessed a key, and which opened on the lane, at one extremity of which stood the cottage of the Foresters. Julia was in possession of Laura's key to this door, and as she unlocked it she raised her eyes, and noted with what intense brilliancy the stars shone. Julia had no religion, but abundance of superstition, and the one white spot in her character had been affection for her mother, who died when Julia was little more than a child. Thus it happened, that, as she looked up at the bright stars, the memory of her mother and her pale dying face came, as it were, with an awful distinctness before her. She paused and shuddered, not out of remorse for the cruel *perfidy* she was practising, but from an instinct of superstition. Then, angry at her weakness, she shook it off and

pursued her way, still thinking tenderly of her mother, and as firm as ever in her purpose of destroying the happiness and fair fame of the daughter of him whose fraternal affection had been the last solace of her poor mother's broken spirit; for Mr. Forester had, in her last hours, been all in all to the unhappy Mrs. Barton. Desperately inconsistent, no less than desperately wicked, is the human heart. Julia mourned for her mother, and at the same moment relentlessly pursued those, whose misfortunes would have made her mother's greatest grief.

Despite the darkness, Julia pursued her way at a rapid pace. She could have trodden that path blindfolded; and now she stood at the remote end of the lane, near a clump of hazels at the verge of Wimbledon Wood. Had the moon been up, both Holly Lodge and the cottage of the Foresters would have been visible.

As Julia approached this clump, or copse, a rustling was heard among the boughs; and then the figure of a man, faintly discernible through the obscurity, emerged from the copse. The twinkling, through the darkness, of the gold epaulets on his shoulders, showed that this person was either a military or naval officer; but the colour of his garb could not have been ascertained, nor any point respecting his appearance beyond his superior height.

"You are late, young lady," he said, as he approached Julia, "and the night is cold and raw. I have been almost perished in waiting for you."

"Indeed!" answered Julia, in the sneering, caustic tone which was almost habitual to her. "I should have thought the sublime and disinterested passion which you bear to the beautiful Miss Danby, would have kept aloof the frosts of January; at least, with such a prize in view, you might be content to encounter some trouble. Such a fortune as she will inherit, indeed such as she has at her command, independent of her mother, would be thought worth a venture by men in circumstances superior to what I suppose *your's to be, sir!*"

"Indeed, madam, you wrong my attachment to Miss Danby," answered the man; "it is herself, and not her fortune, that I seek."

"Psha!" said Julia, interrupting the devoted lover, "these subterfuges are quite unnecessary with me, Mr. Augustus Maltravers. Let us understand each other; it will greatly facilitate the business we have on hand. You, I take it, are a needy, unprincipled fortune-hunter, perhaps of not a very respectable parentage, and certainly without education, but you have a tolerably handsome face and a fine person, which, with an insinuating, free, and easy manner, have smitten the fancy of my cousin Laura—a lady, you will observe, not particularly delicate in her tastes. As for myself, I am, as I have just now said, a cousin of Miss Danby's, and I have an object to accomplish by holding her in my power that will not militate against your interests; indeed it will further them, as I desire of all things that she should marry you. I have had my eye on her for some time, and have been aware that she was carrying on an intrigue, which this morning only furnished me with an opportunity of finally detecting. Of course, I could at once destroy your prospects, by laying before my aunt an information of her meetings with you—for a great portion of the fortune Miss Danby expects is still at her mother's disposal; and I promise you she is a young lady, so far of the opinion that one handsome man is as good as another, that she will be no more disposed to sacrifice her fortune for your sake, than you will be disposed to accept her without one. You will observe, therefore, that you have much to gain by keeping on good terms with me, and everything to lose if you offend me, for Mrs. Danby is as much under my control as her daughter will be in future; and I do not fear to tell you in what subjection you and Laura must hold yourselves to me, because I know very well that it is the fortune and not the girl that you want."

*The bold and determined insolence and authority with which Julia spoke, cowed the less audacious spirit of the man*

before her, who was, indeed, as she accused him of being, only a common fortune-hunter, with whom the silly Laura had become acquainted through the agency of her attendant Jane.

"What is it you wish, then, madam?" said, in a very humble tone, Mr. Augustus Maltravers, whose real appellation, by-the-bye, was much less romantic.

"Why, in the first place," answered Julia, "I would recommend you, as a friend who really wishes you well, to use rather more caution in your visits to this place. In fact, I should advise you and Laura not to meet here again. It is dangerous. As I have found you out, so may others, who will not have any interest in keeping your secret. I will manage for you either letters or meetings in future. In the second place, I must beg you to be assured that I never either do or propose anything without a motive, and that I had a very strong one, when I desired you, this morning, to wait here to-night in the undress of a military officer. You know the cottage yonder, at the end of the lane?—it is the dwelling of the niece and sister-in-law of Mrs. Danby. There is a carriage now drawn up before the garden; and though the night is dark, the light of the lamps will discover your dress and height, though not your features. You will therefore steal cautiously down, as if you did not wish to be seen, but take care that the servants do see you; and it would be as well, if you can command patience, to loiter about till you see a gentleman leave the cottage—that will be the Earl of Alverston; and if you could manage to let him have a glimpse of you, but slip away in the darkness, to avoid speech with him, you will infinitely assist the design which both Laura and I have in view!"

"All this is but a trifling matter," said the man; "I'll manage to be seen, and never fear me for keeping safe out of the chance of being spoken to; but is there no more to be done?"

"Yes," answered Julia; "you will take this note, to-morrow morning, to the address, 'Captain Seymour, Alb-



marle Street,' and if you see the Captain, which is probable you will, let him know whether you are noticed by the servants with the carriage, or the Earl of Alverston himself. And now go, or the Earl will leave the cottage while we are talking. You shall hear from me or from Miss Danby to-morrow."

Having despatched Mr. Maltravers on his infamous errand, Julia Barton would fain have loitered near the cottage herself to ascertain its success, but that she feared her absence from the villa would be observed by Mrs. Danby, who was not acquainted with this portion of the intrigue against the peace and honour of Emily Forester. Miss Julia, therefore, hastened home, and regained her cousin's chamber by the back staircase without having encountered any of the servants. She found Laura there, sitting before the fire, in a fit of not very cheerful or agreeable musing, if an inference might have been drawn from the gloomy look on her not usually expressive features. The truth was that Miss Laura, though usually phlegmatic and not very reflective, had no great love for, and some instinctive terror of, her cousin Julia; and was a little scared to find herself very suddenly, and she scarce knew how, in the power of that young lady. It is astonishing how soon a real difficulty will convert a giddy and unthinking person into a very steady and meditative one. It was the difficulty, the embarrassing position, in which Laura Danby found herself, that made her sit with her hands crossed on her knees, and her eyes fixed on the glowing embers, and her brow contracted with harassing thoughts. So occupied was she, indeed, with those painful thoughts, that she did not at first notice the entrance of the person who was their chief object; but Julia had opened the door softly, and trod with a light step. She at once, however, perceived Laura sitting in the large cushioned chair, with the frowns and pallor of mental distress on her fair and usually florid and cheerful face. *Julia was not sorry to find Laura thoughtful. She might have passed off her solicitude with a jest, but she did not*

hold that it would suit her purpose. Laura was not to deem it a trifling matter that her cousin had learned how weakly she had committed herself to a promise of marriage with a mere adventurer. Yet Laura was a creature so pitiable, so imbecile, that even the hard heart of Julia was touched with a momentary compassion for her. She had no such visitings in behalf of Emily Forester, towards whom she contemplated an injury far deeper than any she could inflict on Laura; but she hated Emily with an intense hatred, because she felt herself in birth, beauty, education, and natural talents, every way her inferior. She could afford to pity Laura, because she could despise her. Very quietly she took off her bonnet and shawl, congratulating herself that fate was most propitious to her that evening, because, to find Laura alone, and in her present mood, was what she most desired, but had not hoped for.

She drew a chair to the opposite side of the fire. When Laura looked up, and in the trembling accent with which she said, "So then, Julia, you have come back; did you see him?" she felt how much her new victim was at her mercy.

"I have seen Mr. Maltravers," answered Julia; and she spoke in so loud a tone that poor Laura started, and besought her to speak lower; she had not herself ventured to mention her lover's name.

"How ridiculous you are, Laura!" said Miss Barton; "there is nobody to hear us. Your affectionate mamma is not, I believe, in the habit of visiting your room even before she retires for the night, much less at this hour of the evening. But I am glad you had sense to come here, because I wished you to know what has passed. Miss Emily is done for. Oh! nothing will persuade the Earl but that Captain Seymour is in the neighbourhood, and by Emily's own appointment. Your Mr. Maltravers will pass for the Captain to-night, and Seymour himself will be here again to-morrow." Then Julia detailed her plot, and expatiated on its excellence.

"Poor Emily!" said Laura, with a sigh, when her cousin had ceased speaking. She had never either said or thought "*poor Emily*" before; but she felt now, on her own account, how terrible a thing it was to be in the power of Julia—the victim of her machinations; and therefore she said, "*Poor Emily!*"

"Poor Emily, indeed!" reiterated Julia, in an accent of spite, while her tawny skin became sallow, for it could not turn pale. "Poor Emily, indeed! What do you mean by that? Would you like to see her a countess, Miss Laura? answer me that! A miserable little doll, with her talents and her good looks; not indeed that I ever thought her pretty, but the men do—at least some. I was surprised even to hear Warrender say, last week, that he thought her pretty!"

"That was unfortunate for Emily," replied Laura, who, like most dull persons, occasionally hit upon smart sayings. "Her chances for being a countess must certainly be less, since Warrender admires her."

Warrender was that young lawyer who had been cajoled by Julia into an engagement with her. It did not, therefore, suit her to notice in direct terms the bitterness of Laura's remark, but she took care to avenge herself for it, in the abrupt manner in which she broached the real object of her present conversation.

"I am glad you are here by yourself, Laura," she said, "because we can at once come to an understanding respecting this foolish business of your corresponding with this Mr. Maltravers, as he calls himself. What return do you intend to make to me for not mentioning your infatuation to your mother?"

"Return, Julia!" ejaculated Miss Danby. "What return do you expect? Surely you will not be so cruel as to betray me? What return do you look for—what do you mean?"

"What I mean, my dear, is this," answered Julia; "*the thing that people always say when they talk of a return for work done or*—"

understand, that if you cannot raise a sum sufficient for my purpose, I shall be constrained to tell my aunt everything; as I am well satisfied that if you cannot pay for my silence, she will be content to pay for the intelligence which will preserve her daughter from an adventurer."

"You speak too harshly of Maltravers, Julia," answered Miss Danby; "and as to money, I think you are very mean and cruel to mention it. I am sure you have had enough from mamma, lately, to satisfy any reasonable person; but if ten or twenty pounds will be of any use to you, I think I can spare so much."

Julia laughed a low, quiet laugh, expressive of supreme confidence in her own power, and a no less supreme contempt for Laura. Then she sat bolt upright on the chair, on which she had hitherto been lounging, and said gravely,

"I really do wonder alike at your meanness in thinking of such a sum, and your folly in naming it. You surely have not considered the nature of your position, or you would not have supposed that I am to be bought off like your waiting-maid, at the price of a new silk gown. No, Laura, I must have a very different sum! I want five or six hundred pounds at least, and you must find them for me!"

"I find five or six hundred pounds!" screamed Laura, quite startled both out of her natural phlegm and her fashionable proprieties. "How can I find five or six hundred pounds, and what can you possibly want with such a sum?"

"My dear Laura, you are speaking most imprudently loud," said Julia. "Do let me advise you, for your own sake, to be more cautious. Let us discuss this matter with temper. I am not in a passion, and it is not your customary fault to be irritable. You ask me how you are to find five or six hundred pounds. And I reply, very easily! You have saved up nearly as much to run away with Mr. Maltravers, but you must postpone that conclusion, and oblige me with the money, that I may marry Mr. Warrender."

"You marry Mr. Warrender!" said Laura with a sneer, of which persons accustomed to her usual sluggish manners would not have supposed her capable. "You forget, my dear, there are two words to that bargain. Will Mr. Warrender marry you? Everybody knows that the young man is a poor, good-natured fool, and has been for a long time heartily sick of his engagement to you, which he would shake off if he could find courage enough."

"Perhaps so!" answered Julia, dryly; "but, however disagreeable a marriage with me may be to Frank Warrender—to marry the Methodist, red-haired daughter of his father's partner would be still more so. He bought the license for marrying me, my dear, some time back; indeed the term of it will be out next week; and as—ahem!—he might not perhaps be in a hurry to procure another, I must avail myself of the present one; and for that purpose the five or six hundred pounds I ask from you will be infinitely useful, for poor Frank is rather extravagant, and if he sacrifices the comforts of his father's house, I must be prepared to offer him an equivalent for a few months at least. That will be enough; for, as you say, he is very foolish, poor fellow, and looks but a little way beyond the present!"

"If you yourself think the young man such a fool, I wonder that you will marry him!" said Laura bitterly.

"Why, as to that, my dear," answered Julia, "I do not know that a great amount of wit, or even wisdom, is desirable in a husband. The fools very often get the money, and beyond that, you must remember, I have not wit and talents such as sweet Emily Forester's, nor beauty and wealth like your sweet self; so if I have a chance for a husband at all, I must not trifle with it, for I see nothing either lovely or agreeable in a single life. Of course, if women are rich, or handsome, or witty, they may put up with being old maids!"

"By that count, then, the ugly and stupid women are the best off!" retorted Laura. "But I can tell you, Miss Julia,

it is not so. Handsome women will not consent to be old maids, that the ugly ones may have husbands. I suppose a handsome woman likes to be married as well as a fright. I do, for one! and as to this five or six hundred pounds you talk about, it is too absurd! How should I come by such a sum?"

"My dear Laura, do not resort to subterfuges," said Julia. "Did I not tell you this morning that I had been watching you for some time past? Your mother has complained of the extravagance of your demands for money, but I know—for I took the trouble to look into your desk the other morning, when you foolishly left it open—that the milliners' and jewellers' bills, for which you pretended to want so much cash, are yet unpaid; and that, moreover, you have in that desk a nice little roll of notes, that will comfortably cover my wedding expenses."

"But I will not give you that money," said Laura violently. "It was a base, mean action to look into my desk. I will not be pillaged by you. I don't care whether you are married or not!"

"I do not expect you to care," answered Julia, "and I don't care whether you care or not. All I care for is, to get the money from you; and, if you do not give it me at once, I will go directly to your mother and tell her all I know respecting your lover. I give you ten minutes to decide!"

With these words, Julia drew her watch from her bosom, and placed it on a little table that stood between herself and Laura.

Miss Danby bit her lips, and her naturally florid face became purple with anger; but she said nothing, only sat tapping the fender with her foot.

"Five minutes are gone, my dear," exclaimed Julia, bending her fierce black eyes upon her victim, with the same surety of triumph, as the cat feels over the mouse that is trembling beneath its paws.

"Well, I do wonder," cried Laura, with a last vain hope of *exasperating the pride of her adversary*, "I do wonder that

you will condescend, I may say, to marry Frank Warrender. Such an indifferent lover will make but a bad husband. And everybody knows that he has been dangling after you for years, and everybody has laughed at you for encouraging him."

"The more reason that I should disappoint everybody's malice, by getting married at last," answered Julia. "And, as to your charitable fear that Frank will not make a good husband, you may spare it, my dear, as altogether misplaced, since I consider it better to have a bad husband than none at all!"

Another interval of silence succeeded these amiable recriminations between the two young ladies. It was terminated by Julia, who said, holding up her watch, and rising from her seat,

"Do not complain of me now, Laura; I have suffered the ten minutes I allowed you to lapse into a quarter of an hour. Once more—will you give me the money? or shall I expose your conduct to your mother?"

Laura maintained her sullen attitude, and Miss Barton moved towards the door; she had her hand even on the lock before Laura started from her seat, and bade her stay. Julia resumed her chair beside the fire, and with hands trembling with rage, Miss Danby took the coveted notes from her desk, and literally threw them in her cousin's face.

"It is foolish to be so angry, Laura," said Julia, as she picked up the notes and deliberately counted them over. "Why aggravate the disagreeables of your position by insulting me? Be assured that we had better remain friends!"

"It is you that offer the insult," returned Laura, sobbing. "Your conduct is outrageous, and I will not bear it."

"My conduct is based upon a regard for my own interest and your character, and you must bear it," remarked Julia, quietly, as she quitted the room.

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## CHAPTER XI.

" I could a tale unfold."

HAMLET.

UTTERLY unsuspecting though Emily was, of the atrocious lengths to which her aunt and cousins were prepared to proceed, in order to prevent her union with the Earl of Alverston, she was yet so far aware of their malevolence, that the scene of the evening was the source of severe anxiety to her. Even the extreme irritation evinced by the Earl against Mrs. Danby, her daughter, and the Bartons, increased this anxiety, for Emily apprehended that he would have treated their insinuations respecting Captain Seymour with more contempt, had not some inclination to jealousy and suspicion, on his part, been aroused by them.

He expressed the most open aversion both to the Danbys and the Bartons, and told Mrs. Forester that he could not consent that either she or Emily should longer remain under pecuniary obligations to them, and that they must give up their present abode and remove from Wimbledon forthwith. As for poor Mrs. Forester, though not unamiable, she was a weak and somewhat self-indulgent woman, and as she was quite aware that the Earl would place her in an abode far superior to the present one, she would have been very willing to quit it the next day. Emily, however, felt that, ill as the Bartons and even Mrs. Danby herself had that evening behaved, the latter lady would have some right to complain of so sudden and complete a rupture, and therefore she proposed some notice of a week or a fortnight, at least, before quitting the cottage. The chief object of the Earl, however, was immediately to remove her from a vicinity in which she would be exposed to the renewed insolence of Captain Seymour; and he would have proposed her proceeding to Alverston the next day and residing with his aunt, but that, in fact, he had not yet made his intended marriage known to the haughty old lady, with whom he apprehended



that Emily's beauty, accomplishments, and good family would not perhaps altogether atone for her not being the daughter of a peer. Nothing would please him but that Emily, at any rate, should quit the cottage the next day. Emily, however, remembered her encounter with the mysterious mendicant in the copse, and her appointment with him for the next evening. The remembrance of that appointment, and of the terrible words which had induced her to make it, had haunted her throughout the day; and she felt it would be as impossible to fail in that appointment, as to make it known either to the Earl, her mother, or any other person. A hint of a deed, a treachery, more ghastly, more horrible than her wildest imagination could have conceived, was furnished by the few appalling words which the mendicant had whispered; and, while yet her blood seemed to grow chill, and her heart beat thick with horror in remembering them, she would not, she dared not, communicate them to another living being. That which the mendicant had intimated was, indeed, too terrible to be spoken of while yet it remained, however slightly, a matter of suspicion; but if that suspicion, which dwelt upon the mind of Emily like the hideous phantasm of a dream, once became a certainty, then was there an awful duty for her to perform, one from which, on the peril of her own soul, she must not dare to shrink.

The Earl, however, dwelt so much on his wish that Emily at least should leave the cottage on the morrow, that poor Mrs. Trevelyan, thinking to relieve her new friend of her embarrassment, greatly increased it, by proposing that Emily should come and stay with her at some new lodgings which she had taken at Kensington.

The Earl was charmed with this proposal, and pressed Emily so eagerly to go home with Mrs. Trevelyan that very night, that she, remembering her appointment, and the necessity for keeping it, was greatly embarrassed to excuse herself. Poor, simple Mrs. Forester increased her daughter's confusion and the persuasions of the Earl by making light

of her own indisposition, which Emily alleged as one reason for not accepting immediately the kind invitation of Mrs. Trevelyan. Indeed, a man less suspicious than Lord Alverston might perhaps have been startled by the pertinacity with which Emily refused to leave home that evening, and the consciousness that she was thereby rendering herself liable to grave doubts increased Emily's distress; and she would even have come to the conclusion that the mendicant was some agent of her aunt or cousins, but that not even for the purpose of compassing her ruin, was it possible to believe that they would have instigated the fabrication of a story so dreadful as that at which he had hinted.

"My dear madam," said the Earl, interrupting Mrs. Forester, as she was entering into a detail of reasons why he could very well dispense with the attendance of Emily; "my dear madam, pray do not press this matter any further: it is sufficiently evident that some affair, more potent than you or I can imagine, will detain Miss Forester here to-morrow, and I am sure that I have no wish to interfere with her arrangements."

The air of proud reserve, the displeased look with which these words were uttered, cut Emily to the heart, and, in spite of her endeavours, she felt her eyes fill with tears.

"Come, my lord," said Mrs. Trevelyan, who perceived her emotion, and who had that intuitive faith in the excellence of Emily which one pure-minded woman always has in another; "come, my lord, you must not increase dear Emily's vexations of the evening, because some little feminine matter, which you have no concern with, prevents her giving me the pleasure of her company home to-night. Do not look at yourself in that glass, now! I would not, for a new velvet dress or a sable tippet, or any other well-considered piece of finery, that the ladies we have left at Holly Lodge should have the satisfaction of seeing you at this moment, for they would surely flatter themselves that, for all, they have 'put rancour in the vessel of your face.'"

"Nay, nay, my dear Mrs. Trevelyan," answered the Earl, with an attempt at gaiety which, to the apprehensive sensibility of Emily, seemed not easily assumed; "I assure you that you do me wrong, or that my looks belie me. I do not rate either myself or Miss Forester so cheaply, that I am disturbed by the impertinence of her cousins, beyond the point of desiring her very speedy removal from their vicinity, and a place where it is evident she is exposed to intrusions, and possible annoyance from Captain Seymour."

With a look full of eloquence, Emily thanked Mrs. Trevelyan for this pleading with her captious lover; but when, after seeing Mrs. Trevelyan into the carriage, the Earl lingered to bid her a renewed farewell beneath the little porch of the cottage, she could not forbear assuring him that it was a purpose connected only with her family affairs that would detain her for a day or two at the cottage, and expressing her fear that the idle and malicious tongues of her cousins had, as Mrs. Trevelyan suggested, some influence with him.

"Not at all, Emily," replied the Earl, "so far as you are concerned. For I tell you frankly, I have so much of Othello in my temper, that 'to be once in doubt,' would, indeed, be 'once to be resolved!'"

And thus Emily and Lord Alverston parted; but the sad heart with which she returned into the cottage would have been made still sadder, had she been aware that, as the carriage of the Earl turned the corner of the lane, a tall figure of a man was seen, by the momentary flash of the lamps, to pass across the road, and that his person was noticed by the Earl, and by his height, and the epaulets glittering on his shoulders, was taken to be no other than Captain Seymour.

A fierce exclamation involuntarily escaped from the lips of the Earl, and he put out his hand to draw the check-string, when he was restrained by the entreaty of Mrs. Trevelyan, *by whom also Maltravers*—for he it was—had been seen.

"*Let me beseech you, my lord,*" said Clara, "do nothing

rashly. I have formed the worst opinion of Miss Forester's relations. What is more probable than that they are in league with this Captain Seymour?"

"Ah, Mrs. Trevelyan!" replied Lord Alverston, bitterly, "I too have thought of that; but why did Emily persist in not accompanying you home to-night?"

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## CHAPTER XII.

"I, whose thought  
Is like a ghost, shrouded and folded up  
In its own formless horror!"

THE CENCI.

If, as the monarch of merry memory is said to have asserted, the climate of England furnishes more days on which it is possible to be abroad with pleasure than any other, the advantage is sadly deteriorated by the rapid changes from heat to cold and wet to dry. Nothing could be more cheerless than the day, for the evening of which Emily had made her appointment with the man Mills. There was no rain, but a bleak wind, like that of March, swept round the cottage, and seemed to parch and shrivel the tender green leaves just bursting from the bud, while the sky looked louring and heavy—dull leaden clouds overspreading its surface.

The day passed very wearily with Emily, for it was a custom with the Earl to visit her each morning, and, since their engagement, he had not failed to warn her if other demands upon his time prevented his doing so. On the preceding night she had understood that he would call as usual; and when the morning passed away and he did not make his appearance, she did not require the reproaches into which her mother launched, to aggravate her uneasiness.

Poor Mrs. Forester, however, was one who was never content with even the inevitable and actual ills of her position; *she must always aggravate her own troubles and*

those of others by meeting them half-way. So she therefore assured Emily, that it was all up. She had lost the Earl of Alverston. He would not forgive her for refusing to accept immediately the kind invitation of Mrs. Trevelyan. Of course, he was offended at her persisting in remaining, even for four-and-twenty hours, in a neighbourhood where she was liable to the impertinence of Captain Seymour. It must look suspicious to him. He was angry; no wonder—it was enough to justify anything that Julia, or Laura, or Caroline could say.

The patience of Emily, who bore all these remarks for some time in silence, was at last fairly exhausted.

"Excuse me, mamma," she said; "I cannot admit that Lord Alverston has a right to put upon me so gross an imputation, because I could not make it convenient to leave home so abruptly last night; and at all events, if he is so weak, I must say, and so jealous—if he has so little generosity and confidence in me, that he will not trust my assertions respecting Captain Seymour, and gives ear to the vile insinuations of the Bartons, I should be greatly wanting in what I call honourable pride, if I did not release him from his engagement. I tell you, if he were ten times the man of rank that he is—if my heart broke in breaking with him—I would not be his wife, if he wants confidence in my integrity and love!"

"Oh, indeed," said Mrs. Forester, "that's another of your fantastical notions. Do, release the Earl from his offer to marry you! You will find, my poor child, that Earls are not to be got every day; and if he is rather exacting—nay, a little jealous even, you ought to put up with it. It is not as if he were a person in your own class of life. You must not expect him to play the lover to you, as if he were only a merchant or professional man."

"Mamma," answered Emily, gravely, "you ought to know me quite well enough to know that I have not played off upon Lord Alverston any of the paltry and contemptible tricks and airs which silly young women are in the habit of

assuming towards the man who has honoured them with the offer of his hand; for that offer, made by any honest and honourable man, is an honour, of which every good and sensible woman will be proud. But you will observe also, that it is not on account of Lord Alverston's rank that I have treated him with this respect. No; I should have observed it towards any man whom I loved so much as to marry, and I expect him to reciprocate that confidence and respect, as much as if our stations were equal; for if he chooses me for his wife, I am to assume that he thinks me worthy of all respect."

"Oh! really, Emily," returned Mrs. Forester, "these fine speeches and notions of yours are quite beyond my comprehension, as I am sorry to say your poor father's often were; and I only wish that this may not end as ill—that you may not lose being a countess, as your father lost Sir Matthew's fortune by being so over proud. Think what will become of me and poor little Walter, if you throw away this fine chance, my dear girl! And yourself too—you will have to go for a governess or some horrid thing or other; for of course there will be a break for us with Mrs. Danby, as she and Laura will not forgive you for spoiling their chances with Lord Alverston; so, of course, there is a pretty prospect for us altogether!"


The concluding portion of this speech was pronounced by Mrs. Forester with a doleful, whimpering voice, the probable prelude, as Emily knew by experience, to a fit of hysterical weeping, which would make her mother seriously ill. The clock, too, had just struck seven, and the gloom that had prevailed all day hastened the duskiness of evening. It was near the time that she should meet the strange man, whose few-whispered words had in them a terrible import, which would have been alone quite enough painfully to occupy the mind of Emily throughout the day.

She endeavoured to soothe her irritable mother. "Dear mamma," she said, "I am sure you are taking a worse view of things than you need to do. As to the Earl, I do not

think much of his not having been here to-day. How is it possible for us to say what unexpected event has detained him? And be sure, dear mamma," and here Emily's voice faltered, and, in spite of her efforts, her eyes filled with tears, "oh, be sure I shall not, impatiently or lightly, take offence with the Earl. I will endure no slight from him as the wealthy nobleman, but, oh! I can bear with much as coming from the man I love. Alas! I am a very woman after all. I do not think, with a reference to him, of money or rank—scarcely even of his noble qualities, his generosity and amiable manners—I only know that I love him; and I sometimes think that this love, so passionate, so absorbing, is so little an effort of my own will, that I should still love him if he were cast down not only from his high worldly position, but even from his moral eminence!"

"Then take my word for it, Emily," said Mrs. Forester, to whom the finer feelings of her daughter were in a great measure unintelligible, "depend upon it, if you do mean to keep on good terms with the Earl, and to do well for me and poor Walter, and be a countess, and drive half your acquaintance mad with envy, you must give in to the Earl a little on account of his rank. So now, be a good girl, and send him a sweet pretty note, to ask why he has not been here to-day; and tell him you will be ready to visit Mrs. Trevelyan to-morrow. And now, just help me to take off my things, my dear, for I feel very unwell, and shall go to bed at once; and then go and warm a little jelly for me; and then, the evening is not very cold, so you could put on your thick shawl, and step down to the village, and see if they have got a new book in at the library, for my nerves are so irritated that I shall want a novel to read myself to sleep over. To be sure, you might meet Captain Seymour; but then, my dear, you have got a tongue in your head, and there are plenty of policemen in the village; and perhaps, after all, it would not be a bad plan to make some public *complaint* against him, that must put an end to all the Earl's *nonsense and jealousy.*"

Very unconsciously, on this occasion, Mrs. Forester served her daughter's purpose by this little display of selfishness; for Emily, finding her mother in so captious a mood, had been vainly considering what excuse she could contrive for going out on that really cold and disagreeable evening. From Holly Lodge Emily had heard nothing during the day, and she therefore concluded that her aunt and cousins had taken umbrage at the abrupt manner in which the Earl had insisted upon her leaving the house on the preceding night—a conviction which made her more than ever anxious that all pecuniary obligations from Mrs. Danby should cease; at the same time she sorrowfully apprehended that, if that worst which her fears foretold, in the communications of the mendicant, were verified, she would be placed in such a position as might lead to a temporary, if not final estrangement from the Earl. Sufficiently distressed, then, with these thoughts, Emily prepared to keep her mysterious appointment. When the nerves are irritated, or the mind burdened with present or impending griefs, external objects, the very state of the atmosphere, becomes powerfully affecting. Thus it was, perhaps, that as Emily issued from the cottage, and the wind swept by in hollow mournful gusts, chill and piercing, and she drew her shawl more closely round her, and looked up at the gray and dreary sky, the dismal foreboding of her soul grew stronger. Grisly tales of cruelty and murder came rushing to her thoughts, and a terror of the person she had appointed to meet fastened suddenly on her heart, and she hesitated whether she should not turn back. A minute of reflection, however, determined her to the more courageous course. It was only necessary indeed to remember the purport of the few words that had been spoken to her, for her to feel that she could encounter any risk, almost any suffering, sooner than live in the uncertainty of the phantasms of horror which those words had called up. So Emily proceeded to the wood. She found the mendicant seated at the foot of that very tree near to which she had fallen on the preceding day. As far, however, as his personal





appearance went, he seemed no longer to merit that appellation: his clothes were clean and whole, and of a good quality, and his countenance, though still anything but prepossessing, looked, now that he had been shaved and washed, less repulsive and sinister.

In spite of his lame leg, he rose briskly at Emily's approach.

"You are late, young lady," he said; "it is getting so dark, that, in ten minutes more, we might have missed each other altogether. It is still light enough however, I think, for you to examine the seal on this letter, if you cannot read the writing. Do you know that seal?"

"Do I know it?" ejaculated Emily faintly. "Alas! yes. When was this letter written? I can distinguish the handwriting, but not the date."

"That letter," answered the man, "was written only six months since, as you will perceive if I suffer you to retain it, which I will do on your solemn promise to keep your possession of it profoundly secret. Indeed, Miss Forester, I may as well tell you at once, that though hitherto almost miraculously preserved, the life of the unfortunate writer of that letter is at the mercy of your courage and discretion. Any violent method, any attempt to proceed by the law, will but end in the total destruction of the person whom you seek to preserve!"

"But I," faltered Emily, "alone, unassisted! Alas! what can I do?"

"Everything, Miss Forester!" answered the man, gravely, "if you rely upon yourself. Everything, in this case, is to be done by caution, and an honest deceit practised against those who in their deceits have been dishonest. But here are papers which my wife has drawn up, and by which you will perceive the nature of the frauds which have been used; and perceive, too, that it is only by the utmost caution—I think, by the plan which you will see proposed there, that the last and worst evil, the event which you have supposed to take place so long ago, will be finally averted. But, oh! it is

only by the use of some deceit that you may bring vengeance on the heads of the wretches from whose hands you have suffered so much!"

"Alas!" returned Emily, "it is not vengeance, it is justice only, we should seek!"

The man laughed bitterly. "Well, call it justice, if you like, young lady," he replied; "my Cicely, too, gives it that name, and I shall not quarrel with either of you about a word. But remember, there is no time to be lost. You will, I think, yourself hold it needful, after you have read those papers, to leave London to-morrow. I have myself got money enough for the journey; for, to escape the sharp eyes of the devils who have fabricated all these pretty manoeuvres, you must be content to travel in very humble style; and if you are afraid to trust to me, you will not doubt poor Cicely."

"Alas, no, poor Cicely!" said Emily. "Oh, poor Cicely! I had hoped for her a better fate. You speak, too, of having money, and yesterday, even, you appeared in such deep distress. I dare not ask you how you have procured it?"

"Yet you might do so, lady," returned Mills, "and have an answer to the perfect quieting of your conscience. I had twenty pounds, after I saw you yesterday, from Josiah Teal; and the old rogue honestly owes me three times as much, for the laces and brandy I smuggled for him two years ago, when I got a shot from a revenue officer, that I shall carry the effects of to my grave; for it narrowly escaped my lungs, and I have coughed and spit blood in the winter ever since!"

"And Cicely, she will go with us?" inquired Emily.

"Indeed she will," said Mills, "for the poor creature you go to save will require more care and help than you alone can give. But Cicely has explained everything in that paper, and we shall expect to see you to-morrow at our lodgings."

"And this dreadful secret!—may I not trust it to a single friend?" inquired Emily.

"Not to your husband, if you had one, Miss Forester!" replied Mills, in an almost savage accent. "I betray and will deliver up those who have wronged you, and been ungrateful to me; but I will not implicate in their downfall, or reveal to any one, save yourself, the retreat of persons who have never injured you, and who, whatever they may be to the rest of the world, are good and faithful friends of mine."

"I will peruse these papers, then," said Emily, "and you may expect me to-morrow; but if our expedition proves unsuccessful, I shall pay a fearful price for the secrecy you compel me to practise."

"Do not fear for that, Miss Forester," answered Mills, as they parted; "rather think with what triumph you will return to London, if we obtain success!"

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### CHAPTER XIII.

"Thou knowest we work by wit, and not by witchcraft,  
And wit depends on dilatory time.  
Does 't not go well?"

OTHELLO.

WITH the doleful images and gloomy impressions which had disturbed her all day, strengthened by her conversation with Mills, Emily now retraced her way homewards. The packet which the man had given to her seemed to press like a load of lead against her heart, and bitter tears burst from her eyes as she asked herself in what position this secret journey would place her with the Earl—that journey, which might possibly be fruitless in behalf of the person for whom it was undertaken, and respecting the object of which she must then remain for ever silent! Some personal peril to herself, also, was involved in that journey; but of that she did not pause to think. It was the invidious position in which *it would place her* that made it so hard a trial, even for the generous-hearted and courageous Emily, to resolve to brave

all opinions, and adventure that journey, and maintain its cause a secret. Thus, as she retraced her melancholy way homewards, she forgot the mission to the library in the village, with which her mother had charged her—forgot, even, to think of what excuse she should fabricate to that kind-hearted, but weak parent, in order to account for this strange journey.

The weather, too, remained in unison with her dreary thoughts; the rising wind swept with a hollow moaning sound among the—as yet—almost leafless branches of the trees, and sleet and rain driven before it, occasionally dashed in her face. But poor Emily was unconscious of all—the howling gust, and the beating rain; her suffering was of the mind; she felt only anguish for the present, and harrowing fears for the future. She saw only the form of her lover, with a countenance full of sorrow and of anger, repudiating her as unworthy of his love; and, when in the extreme bitterness and grief of that fancy, she exclaimed to herself that she could not bear it—that she must discover all, and preserve the love of Alverston—then rose between her and that resolve, another, a piteous object, imprisoned and betrayed, sick and suffering, and stretching out the clasped hands of entreaty to her for aid; while, in the background, lurked, for that unfortunate, death in its most awful aspect, by poison, by the knife, or by starvation. No; Emily would not resolve to abandon the cause of one so wretched, though abiding by it should destroy her own happiness for ever. . .

Thus it was, that in the tumult, the distraction of these wretched thoughts, Emily not only did not feel the violence of the storm, but she did not heed the crashing of the boughs, and the approaching sound of carriage wheels, which she must otherwise have heard in the pauses of the gusts; nay, it was not till she felt herself roughly grasped, that she was aware of the presence of a man, who had been watching for her on the outskirts of the copse.

*Emily struggled violently, and vainly endeavoured to fr*

herself from the hold of this person; nor was her alarm lessened when the well-known and hated accents of Captain Seymour smote her ear.

"Charming Emily!" he said, "you are as mysterious as lovely, but I have not time to consider the motives of the pretty prudery which causes this reception to be so different to that which your delightful billet had given me reason to expect; we will talk it over by-and-by. My carriage is at hand, and you will, of course, favour me with your company to town."

With these words the Captain passed his arm round Emily's waist, and endeavoured to force her towards the spot where his carriage was indeed waiting. With the conviction that she was the victim of some deep laid and dreadful plot, Emily shrieked, and called for help.

"Scream, if you please, Emily," said the Captain, still maintaining his hold; "it is not a bad stroke of acting, because your cries may be heard, and it will perhaps be as well that it should be supposed that you accompany me unwillingly. I am quite generous enough to sacrifice my character to yours."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Emily, "what do you mean? Oh, my mother! my beloved Alverston! why are you not here to protect me!"

While these few sentences had passed between them, Captain Seymour had forced Emily towards the carriage, the door of which the footman held in his hand; but just as he was about to lift her into it, still shrieking and calling for help, an indignant voice sounded in his ears, and a stronger hand than his own wrenched the young girl from his brutal grasp; and never had the form of the Earl, for he it was who had come so opportunely to her assistance, been so welcome to the eyes and the heart of Emily as at that moment.

"You will answer to me, sir, for this brutal conduct towards Miss Forester," said the Earl to Captain Seymour, in a voice hoarse with indignation, while the rescued Emily clung, weeping and trembling, to his bosom.

"At your pleasure, my lord," replied the Captain, with a careless air; "though I really must say that the lady is a little capricious, since I am here to-night on her own written invitation; and it is a little hard to brave, not only wind and weather, but the fiery wrath of such a Spanish lover as your lordship, on behalf of a young lady, who does not appear for one hour to know her own mind."

"What do you mean, sir?" indignantly demanded the Earl. "Do you add an insolent attempt at a jest, and a calumny, to your outrageous conduct?"

"Faith, no, my Lord," responded the Captain; "and I shall have infinite pleasure in showing to you, or the lady herself, to-morrow, the note with which she favoured me to-day."

"Note, sir!" exclaimed Emily. "I sent you no note."

"Pardon me, charming Miss Forester," answered the Captain, "I would not rudely contradict you, save for your own sake; and as I do not consider it possible for you to have admirers more devoted than both the Earl of Alverston and myself, and you seem withal so graciously disposed to smile on both, it would be a pity that one should be the means of depriving you of the other; an event not of unlikely occurrence, if those ugly articles, pistols and swords, are brought into requisition between us; which must surely be, if I do not hold to the note with which you were pleased to honour me to-day."

Emily would have again indignantly protested that she had sent no note, but that she was interrupted by the Earl who bade the Captain beware how he added forgery to his other delinquencies. "For you will understand, Captain Seymour," he added, "that, in such a case, I shall hand you over to the law, instead of taking from you such satisfaction as one gentleman may demand from another."

"To you, or the law either, my lord, I am ready to afford the most ample satisfaction," answered the Captain; "but do not be angry till you have considered the conduct of the lady."

She is playing a double game, but for the life of me I cannot conceive what it is to end in. For the present I must wish you a good evening, my lord; and shall be happy to see you, and show you Miss Forester's note to-morrow, at my lodgings. With these words, Captain Seymour stepped into his carriage and drove off.

Untoward as this incident of the renewed persecutions of Captain Seymour appeared at first, it had the effect of removing the Earl's jealousy, for the circumstances under which he had again rescued Emily, her passionate entreaties for release, convinced him that she really had not connived at Captain Seymour's presence at Wimbledon, while the gallant officer's assertion, of having received a letter from her, he regarded as an impudent falsehood, or still more impudent forgery.

It should be remembered that Emily had not expected to see the Earl that night, but, in fact, his jealous apprehensions had led him to the cottage, where he heard from Mrs. Forester that Emily had gone down to the village, and, alarmed by her protracted absence, had sallied out to meet her, at the very moment when she was assailed by Captain Seymour.

At the cottage, too, on her return, Emily found her Cousin Julia, who, affecting to ignore all that had passed on the preceding evening at Holly Lodge, had called, as she said, to inquire after her Aunt Forester's health. So consummate, indeed, was the hypocrisy of this woman, that it imposed even upon the Earl, who really thought, from the apparent earnestness and candour of her manner, that she was sincerely attached to the Foresters, and that a mere simplicity had led her to take part with her sister and the Danbys.

His Lordship, then, was in very good spirits, for the supposed appearance of Captain Seymour on the preceding evening was, to him, accounted for, without any imputation upon Emily, by his attempt of the present one; when, therefore, he proposed again that Emily should leave the cottage

on the morrow, and she replied that certainly she would do so, he noted not how sickly a smile accompanied her words, and finally took his leave of her in all the bright dreams of a generous love and a restored confidence.

Meanwhile, Emily withdrew to her chamber, on the departure of the Earl, with a bursting heart, to examine the papers given to her by the man Mills. What varied and terrible emotions agitated her as she read! How often did her trembling hands drop the paper, as her eyes grew dim with tears! How bitter a feeling of indignation caused her more than once to start from her seat, and pace the room, to subdue herself to the task of continuing the perusal of that narrative of matchless cruelty and wrong! The clock had struck one, ere Emily had finished the examination of those papers; finally, she dropped them with a sigh, and fell into a profound reverie.

"Yes," she at length mentally exclaimed, "Cicely is right; I see it must be so, there is no remedy; and this dreadful and dangerous step I must take secretly, too, for neither poor mamma, nor my dear Alverston, would possibly consent to my encountering so much risk; yet, I should be the most ungrateful, the most cowardly of human beings, did I hesitate. I must go, I must go, even if I never return—if I myself am murdered!"

Emily shuddered as that last awful word involuntarily passed her lips. Then she thought how young she was, and of her weak but fond mother, and her little brother, and, more than all, of her handsome, noble-hearted, and noble-minded lover; and it seemed so terrible a thing to chance the sacrificing of them all, that, for a time, she felt that the effort was more than she could bear, and she almost resolved to abandon the unhappy person whose story the paper had related. Not long, however, could the generous heart of Emily Forester hold to this selfish mood.

"No, no," she exclaimed, "dearest, most beloved ones—mother, Walter, Alverston—not for your sakes even, can I



become the cold and heartless being, who would be unworthy of your love. The ways of man are full of iniquity, but Heaven is merciful and just; I will not believe that I shall fail to do prosperously, when I resolve to do rightly!"

Then, after making these reflections, Emily wrote two letters; one was to her mother, and the other to the Earl of Alverston; they were both blotted with her tears. The most painful part of the task which Emily had imposed upon herself was over when these letters were written. Then she sealed up again the packet she had been reading, and fastened it in a small bundle of linen and other necessaries. In the bosom of her dress also she secured the little amount of money, about ten pounds, which was in her possession; then she equipped herself in a plain dark dress, a close bonnet, and large shawl. When Emily had completed these preparations, the first streaks of the dawn were looking redly in the east, and a kind of gray, misty obscurity had superseded the darkness of the night. The violence of the storm had lulled, and the wind only occasionally swept round the house, with a wailing, dirge-like sound. Emily had been up the whole night, but she felt no want of sleep; her strong excitement supported her, and now, in the gray of the morning, when not a sound was heard, save that hollow sighing of the wind, and the pattering of the rain from the eaves, she took up her little bundle, and crept noiselessly from her chamber, having placed the letters for her mother and the Earl in a conspicuous place on her dressing-table. Poor Emily, she paused as she passed the door of Mrs. Forester's room, and debated with herself, whether she should venture in, and kiss her mother and little Walter as they slept; but she remembered that even the opening of the door might awake them, and she forbade herself the indulgence of that farewell, and stole down stairs. The window of the little parlour was merely hasped, and its distance from the flower-bed below was so trifling, that Emily preferred that mode of egress to the noise attendant on opening the door. So she effected

her escape without disturbing either her mother, the servant or the child; and ten minutes after she left the cottage, she was walking at a brisk pace on the road to London. This fatigue of walking, however, on a wet and raw morning, was presently spared to her by the courtesy of an honest waggoner, who seated her upon a heap of straw among the articles he was conveying to market.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

"If consequence do but approve my dream,  
My boat sails freely both with wind and stream!"

OTHELLO.

IF the Earl of Alverston, in his ignorance of the new and terrible cause of anxiety that was weighing upon Emily's heart, left the cottage satisfied with the present, and hopeful for the future, Julia Barton quitted it in an absolute frenzy of exultation. The events of the evening had been beyond her most extravagant hopes; for, though it is true that Captain Seymour had visited Wimbledon that day, on the receipt of the note which she had sent to him by the man Maltravers, it exceeded both his expectations and hers, that Emily should have ventured out alone in the dusk of the evening, a circumstance which Julia had learned from the waiting-maid Jane, who expressed her disgust at what she called such "forward courage in Miss Forester," not three minutes before the Captain's card was sent in to Julia. Jane had, it must be observed, caught sight of Emily quitting the cottage, as she herself passed under the escort of one of Mrs. Danby's footmen. It is true, that favourable impression which the Earl had received, with regard to Emily, might have been thought to foil the machinations of Julia, but her plot was too deeply laid. She knew that in the letter which Captain Seymour boasted of having in his possession, she had so accurately imitated the hand-writing of, Emily, that the

young girl herself might have been startled in seeing it. In this atrocious art of forging the writing of other people, Julia was an adept, and, with her customary craft, she concealed her power, on purpose to work with it more mischievous effects. Her sister Caroline alone was aware of her skill in forgery, and not even to her did she make known the particular occasions upon which she exercised it.

It mattered little then, in Julia's mind, that the Earl believed that Captain Seymour was endeavouring to force Emily away against her will, as Julia would soon alter his opinion; and if she could not prevail upon him to make her sister a countess, at all events she would prevent that distinction being conferred upon her cousin. With regard to her own more immediate affairs, and in particular, her marriage, Julia was not a lady to let—as the proverb has it—"the grass grow under her feet," and she had despatched her sister to town the day before with a note to Mr. Warrender, intimating her possession of the five hundred pounds which she had extorted from Laura Danby, and also intimating to the gentleman that it would now be as well for him to keep his promises, and make use of the marriage license, which would otherwise be out of date.

Now the fact was, that Mr. Warrender, though sufficiently weak, was also sufficiently selfish; he was much annoyed, too, by a tailor who was tired of waiting for his money, and the five hundred pounds mentioned by Julia would be as useful in relieving his embarrassments as the same number of thousands could have been to an extravagant peer; so Frank Warrender made up his mind in the fashion of the celebrated Mr. Bumble, to sell himself cheap, "dog-cheap!" for it was going dog-cheap to part with his liberty, and, for a poor five hundred pounds, yoke himself for life to a woman whom he had never really liked, whose temper he dreaded, and who had in the first instance tricked him into an engagement with her. In excuse for Frank Warrender, it must, however, be added, that, as Julia had herself said, if he disliked her,

he disliked the daughter of his father's partner much more; so he agreed with Caroline to marry her sister the next day, but the marriage was to be for some time concealed from his family and all of Julia's, save her sister Caroline and her cousin Laura; and to maintain this secrecy, Julia was to meet him at one of the London churches early on the following morning, accompanied only by Caroline, and after the ceremony return to her aunt's villa at Wimbledon. This day which Julia had appointed for her wedding, was the same on which her cousin Emily had started on her melancholy and secret journey to the country.

With all her craft, and all her boldness, Julia was, in some respects, the weakest and most superstitious of women, and a doleful feeling, in no way resembling the joyous anticipations of a bride, fastened on her heart, as she looked forth from her window upon the dull, gray, cheerless April morning.

Julia upon this occasion had risen so early as seven o'clock, for she had told Mrs. Danby that her father's domestic affairs required the presence of Caroline and herself at home for a few hours that morning; Caroline, therefore, was also up, and even the idle Laura left her bed, and, wrapt in a dressing gown, ran into Julia's room, to wish her joy on her wedding day. These wishes were offered by Laura with a kind of half sincerity, for her own character was a curious compound of an easiness of temper, that passed with many persons for real good nature, mingled with occasional exhibitions of feminine malice, which evinced that she had little more real benevolence of heart than Julia herself. On this occasion she was actuated, not only by the natural facility of her temper, but also by the conviction that she must remain on good terms with Julia, if the latter was to remain silent with regard to Maltravers; at the same time she still felt so sore at heart for the loss of her five hundred pounds, that she could not resist the temptation of reminding Julia, that so private a wedding was, after all, a rather humdrum affair. So, as Julia drew the shawl over her violet-coloured satin dress, and

tied the strings of her pink bonnet, she said, "Well, I don't know how I shall manage; for, after all, Julia, one would like a bit of a sensation about one's marriage. To be sure, you and Frank don't care for each other the less, but still it is not like a wedding; no breakfast, and lot of girls for bridesmaids, half dying with vexation; no trip into the country, and no lace or orange flowers, or white satin. Maltravers must look out, after all; I do not know but what I shall change my mind, seeing you go off so dull and meagre, Julia dear, to be married in your every-day dress!"

The conclusion of this speech was made with a double purpose. In the first place, Laura wished to impress her cousin with the belief that she might herself shake off the love-suit of Mr. Maltravers, and that therefore she was not in Julia's power; and in the second, to annoy the latter, by reminding her of all the unpleasant circumstances attending her marriage, for Julia had always expressed a wish to enjoy all the pomp and display which a wedding would admit of, and Laura was so far unostentatious, that she really cared very little about it. Julia, however, was one who would always maintain that whatever she did, whether she were compelled to it or not, was the very best thing to be done; therefore, in reply to her cousin, she boldly asserted that for her part she despised the fuss and publicity which people generally indulged in on the event of a marriage, and took leave of Laura with a smiling countenance, protesting that there was a romance about the fashion of her wedding, which was one of the most delightful circumstances connected with the affair. No sooner, however, was she seated in her aunt's carriage, which was to convey her to her father's house, whence she and Caroline were to slip out and join Mr. Warrender, than she burst out into a tempest of wrath against Laura, protesting, at the same time, that she would make her rue her *ally* impertinence about the private marriage; in which resolve she was encouraged by her sister, who, destitute of Julia's cunning, possessed an ample share of her spite; indeed, these sisters were

always at accord, and as much attached to each other as people united by a bad sympathy can be.

In order to avoid observation, and the merest chance of any acquaintance of either party being present, Julia and Mr. Warrender had settled to be married at a church in the neighbourhood of Soho, at the door of which indeed Mr. Warrender was to meet his bride and her sister. Thus it was that as the cab, which the two girls had taken to convey them to the church, turned the corner of Soho Square, Caroline, who was looking from the window, suddenly seized the arm of her sister, exclaiming, "Look, look, Julia, there is Emily, as I live! Has that sly thing, Laura, told her about your wedding and set her to watch? Oh, but if she has, and I were you, I would make them both remember it!"

"Nonsense, child, you make a mistake," answered Julia; "Laura would not trust Emily; and if she did, it would be no matter, for Emily is such a poor good-natured fool, that she would not do or say anything to harm me or any one else."

"But it is Emily," persisted Caroline. "Just look, there she is, turning the corner of the square, in her old brown woollen shawl and black gown."

Thus directed by her sister, Julia looked from the window, and did indeed see a young woman, who, by her height, attire, and step, she concluded to be Emily Forester, cross the end of the square, and turn down Greek Street.

"Well, Caroline, this is odd," ejaculated Julia, as she sunk back upon the seat; "that is Emily, I believe, and no one else. What on earth can she be doing here, in that shabby shawl and gown, and with that common-looking woman in her company? Look out sharp when we get to the church, Carry, perhaps the little wretch is going to watch us."

Caroline looked out quite as sharp as her sister desired, and Julia looked sharply too, but when the vehicle stopped they saw nothing of Emily, nor had Mr. Warrender, who was waiting under the church porch, seen her either. Julia, however, whispered her sister to watch and see if Emily came in during

the ceremony; but when she was fairly within the church, she forgot Emily and Laura, and all her plots and spites, in the thrill of superstitious horror that struck to her heart when she perceived the walls of the sacred edifice hung with *black*! The season was Lent, which had fallen late that year; but Julia, who called herself a member of the church of England, and was a practical Atheist, never entering a place of worship, or uttering a prayer, was unacquainted with the Christian custom of hanging the church with black, during that solemn and penitential time.

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## CHAPTER XV.

"That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleep in spite of thunder."

MACBETH.

A GAY wedding was that of Julia Barton, a fair and merry bridal, when the bride trembled, not with the tender fears of a young and innocent maiden, but with the terrors of an ill omen, the bodings of a suddenly-awakened and dismal superstition. After the marriage, too, at the church doors, no merry and sly congratulations from friends, jocose old men and women, fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts; but, instead, a whispered caution from the bridegroom to his bride, that she would of all things keep their marriage secret, as his father's indignation, if he knew that he had thus put it out of his power to wed the lady whom he had selected for him, would know no bounds. Then Julia, who, with all her sins, was not ungenerous to those whom she really loved, took some notes from her pocket-book, and forced them into Warrender's hand, who, on his part, would fain have refused them, for Warrender had enough of gentlemanly and kind feeling to be ashamed of thus receiving money from his wife on their wedding-day. Julia, however, insisted, and the young man parted from her with the con-

viction that at least his wife loved him very much, to console him for his inauspicious marriage. On their way back to Mrs. Danby's, Julia and Caroline were engaged in much graver conversation than usually takes place between a bride and bridesmaid. Caroline, like her sister, was superstitious, and no less than Julia had she been shocked by the black draperies of the church; indeed, it would have been a demand upon a strong mind, to shake off the impression of an ill omen under the circumstances, and Julia had not a strong mind, only a cunning one. From speaking of the church hung with black, which was the subject uppermost in their thoughts, the two sisters however turned to the mention of Emily Forester, and vainly surmised what possible motive could have led her to the neighbourhood of Soho at that early hour.

"Really, my dear!" said Julia, at last, laughing bitterly, "I shall begin to think we have not, after all, slandered Miss Emily, but only by a kind of prophecy have forestalled the knowledge of her proceedings, miracle of excellence and purity as she is!"

"What do you mean, Julia?" inquired her duller-witted sister.

"Mean, my dear? Why, that really she has a tenderness for Captain Seymour, after all," answered Julia. "Well, for my part, I always did think it was hypocrisy her pretending to dislike the Captain so much, and to be so much shocked at the freedom of his proposals, it was just to scare him into offering to marry her; but, of course, as far as marriage is concerned, the Earl is a better chance, but I believe in her heart the sly girl likes the Captain best, and that she has been out so early this morning to meet him. I am sure it is but fair, both to the Earl and the Captain, to interfere, and prevent their being taken in by such an artful creature; I would not have it on my conscience to let such a character as Emily escape! You see that she justifies all that we have ever thought of her; but, thank Heaven, she will be found out; the



Earl shall not be taken in by her, I am resolved on that!"

Julia pronounced the last words with quite an air of virtuous indignation, in which Caroline participated, all the more that she thought, if this wicked Emily were deprived of the chance of being a countess, the chance would then be hers. And so, with both the sisters in this mood of stern, unflinching, virtuous indignation against Emily, the courage that conveyed them drew up against the door of Holly Lodge.

To the surprise of the sisters, as they alighted, the waiting-maid, Jane, came running out to meet them. "Oh, Miss Barten! oh, Miss Caroline!" she exclaimed, "your aunt and Miss Laura are both gone to the Cottage, and they left word that you were to go there as soon as you came home. Such an affair, young ladies. There's Miss Forester, who always looked so meek and modest like, has run away, and left letters for her poor mamma and the Earl of Alverston on the table; I don't know what they are about—the letters, for the little servant, Mary, came running here about nine o'clock, to say that Miss Emily had gone away, and her mamma was in fits, so Miss Laura and Mrs. Danby went over, and I went with them, and when Mrs. Forester got a little better, my mistress sent me back to tell you that you were to go there directly you came home." Julia and Caroline, it may be readily believed, lost no time in obeying this injunction of their aunt, but hastened immediately to the Cottage, animated alike by curiosity and a sentiment of gratified malice.

The scene of distress, however, that was there exhibited, would have touched any hearts less hard than theirs, with a sentiment of compassion. Poor Mrs. Forester had recovered from the fit that had seized her on reading the note left by Emily, which had been brought to her bedside by little Walter, who, waking at his usual hour, was surprised that *his sister did not come to dress him*, and running into her room, took back to his mother the two notes, and then went

that Emily was not in her chamber, and had not, apparently, been in bed during the night.

The letter, though worded in the strongest terms of entreaty, that Mrs. Forester would not alarm herself, and containing assurances which, unhappily, Emily had little felt, of her present safety and speedy return, afforded the poor mother but little consolation; the severest part of her trial being in the suspicion that forced itself even upon her unwilling mind, that the secrecy of Emily was caused by a consciousness of error. It was while she still lay in a fit, that the frightened servant, telling little Walter to watch by her, ran to Holly Lodge, and brought back Mrs. Danby and Laura.

When Caroline and Julia reached the cottage, they found Mrs. Forester wrapped in a dressing gown and shawl, extended on a sofa in the little parlour, with Emily's letter lying open on the table, and Mrs. Danby and Laura loading her with condolences, which were artificial, and expressing a surprise that was real.

Julia and her sister, who pretended that a visit to one of the music-sellers had taken them into Soho Square, had, of course, their story about having seen Emily that morning, which they further graced by saying, that the woman in whose company she was, presented so disreputable an appearance that they really could not, on that account, speak to Emily, who seemed to be in a great hurry, and did not notice them. "We did not think much of the matter," added Julia, "for Emily is such an odd girl, never doing anything like other people, and so wonderfully charitable and wise, and all the rest of it, that we took it for granted, that the woman was some poor wretch with whom she was playing the part of Lady Bountiful."

"But, oh, Julia! where can she be gone—what has become of her?" ejaculated the unhappy mother.

"What has become of her!" said Julia. "Really, my dear aunt, if it were not for your distress, I could almost laugh at the absurdity of such an inquiry. Why, of

course, she has gone off with Captain Seymour. I always did think myself that Emily really liked him, and that her ambition, of which you know, aunt, she makes quite a boast, alone led her to think of marrying the Earl; but I suppose that mighty love has, after all, overpowered ambition in Emily's case, as it has done in many more."

"I do not believe it!" said Mrs. Forester, passionately; "my poor Emily detested and despised Captain Seymour. Look, too, at the letter which she has left for the Earl; which, by-the-by, Mrs. Danby ought not to have opened. See there what she says to Lord Alverston—how great a grief it is to her, that even for a time she must lie under his suspicion and displeasure. No, no! what has become of her; it distracts me to think; but this I am sure, she has not gone with Captain Seymour."

"I wish, my dear aunt, you may be able to persuade Lord Alverston to that!" said Julia. "And here comes his carriage; now then we shall see. Really this dear Emily, with her eccentric ways, furnishes us with scenes that are quite dramatic."

"Yes," returned Caroline, who had, along with her sister, risen and looked from the window at the sound of carriage wheels, "and the present scene will be none the less dramatic, that here comes also, rumbling along, the brougham of that dear old lady, Mrs. Price, who is almost as eccentric as Emily herself, and has chosen to be quite her champion."

"I am very sorry that Mrs. Price has come," said Mrs. Danby, "she is so rude and violent."

"La, mamma, never mind that," exclaimed Laura; "she is, at any rate, very amusing; besides you forget, since Emily has left the poor Earl in the lurch, there will be a chance for Mrs. Price herself; you know that she fancies all the men are in love with her!"

*This malignant badinage of Laura and her cousins was here cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Price and the Earl, with whom Julia assumed the office of spokeswoman; while*

Mrs. Danby, covering her face with her handkerchief, affected to partake in the real grief of her sister-in-law, and the two younger ladies, Laura and 'Caroline, whispered together in a corner of the room.

In placing Emily's letter in the hand of the Earl, Julia apologised for its having been broken open, saying that "dear Aunt Danby, when she found what had happened, really hardly knew what she was about, she was so terrified!"

"Ah, hem, was she!" said Mrs. Price. "Wide awake and cool enough to gratify her curiosity, though. If Miss Forester had intended that letter for general reading, she would not have addressed it to Lord Alverston, and sealed it, I suppose."

Julia looked daggers at Mrs. Price for this speech, but did not venture further reply. As for the Earl, he was alike astonished and alarmed on perusing Emily's letter; but Julia mistook the expression of mere surprise in his countenance for that of jealousy and outraged pride, and defeated her own intentions by saying, "Pray, my lord, bear it patiently; our affections are not always under our own control; 'tis better perhaps that poor Emily has acted with this decision, than if availing herself of your generosity, she had ventured to become, your wife, while she was so strongly attached to Captain Seymour. Pray, then, my lord, be patient!"

"Madam!" replied the Earl, coldly, "I am patient, and I do not coincide with your opinion; I do not believe that Miss Forester has left her home with Captain Seymour, nor do I believe that her flight is any way connected with him! What is your opinion of that letter, Mrs. Price?"

As the Earl spoke he placed the letter in the old lady's hands, who, after perusing it twice, returned it to him, saying, "Does your Lordship really wish for my opinion of this affair?"

"Decidedly so, madam!" replied the Earl.

"Well, then, my lord, answered Mrs. Price, "I should like you would call and show that letter to my son; for I am

satisfied, from the expressions she uses, that it is a matter of a much more serious nature than anything connected with such a stupid fop as Captain Seymour, that has led Miss Forester away in this manner. There is some rank villainy at the bottom of the whole affair. Either it is some deep laid plot on the part of a foe to destroy the poor girl altogether, or it is a plan, she has herself contrived with a friend to discover and reveal some enormous wickedness!"

"What do you mean, Mrs. Price, what do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Danby, suddenly removing the handkerchief from her face, and discovering her features livid and convulsed, either with fear or passion. "What villainy can there be—what foe can a poor silly girl such as Emily have? It would be worth people's while, to be sure, to do her any mischief, she has so much money to lose!"

"Not much to lose, ma'am, certainly," answered Mrs. Price, "and we know how that comes about, too; but she may yet have something to discover and something to win."

"I defy your insinuations, madam," returned Mrs. Danby; "and since you compel me to speak out, I must tell you that to my knowledge Miss Forester wrote to Captain Seymour yesterday. If Lord Alverston chooses to call at the Captain's lodgings, he can see the note. He will know Miss Forester's writing."

"Oh, yes, I dare say," answered Mrs. Price, "no doubt, the writing is very like Miss Forester's; I dare say Miss Julia Barton can mimic her cousin's writing as well as mine, which she did in sending a set of love verses, pretended to come from me, to that tipsy, knavish, old villain, Josiah Teal. Such sharp young ladies as Miss Julia, should remember that there are other people in the world as sharp as they!"

Julia fired up at these remarks, for she could, upon occasions, exhibit a most unfeminine violence, and she bade Mrs. Price beware, assuring her that she would not endure her affronts, if her Aunt Danby did.

"Oh, yes, you will, Miss Barton, and a great deal more,"

cried Mrs. Price, with exasperating coolness; "the world will take the conceit out of you long before you have done with it, and out of your Aunt Danby too, if she does not mend her manners. And now I will give you and her, too, a bit of friendly advice—just go away, and leave me to comfort Mrs. Forester, and mind, no more plotting and planning, it will not be good for you!"

"I shall certainly go, madam," said Mrs. Danby, drawing her shawl round her, "for I do not choose to stay in my sister-in-law's house to be insulted by you, though the house was my gift to her."

"I do not see that," answered Mrs. Price; "it was bought with old Sir Matthew's money, was it not?"

"Yes, madam," returned Mrs. Danby, "with Sir Matthew's money, which is now mine."

"Oh, is it indeed, ma'am? Very well, good day; take care that Sir Matthew's money is yours, and that you keep it," said Mrs. Price, as Mrs. Danby, driving her daughter and nieces before her, as a hen does her chickens, sailed majestically out of the cottage.

The Earl, whose refinement was a little shocked at the abrupt manner of Mrs. Price, ventured partly to express his opinion.

"Oh, nonsense, my lord," said the rough dealing old woman, "they have had too much civility by half as it is; they ought to have been kicked out!"

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## CHAPTER XVI.

"Wend not, I charge thee, with these desperate men!"

HERTRAM.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening of the day on which *Emily Forester* had so mysteriously abandoned her home, that in the library of the private house of Mr. Price

in Woburn Place, there were assembled, the lawyer himself, his mother, and the Earl of Alverston, and, though last, by no means the least important, an elderly and meagre-looking woman, clad in faded attire, whose whole appearance would have evoked the common expression "that she had seen better days."

Broken both in mind and body seemed this miserable creature; her dress of black satin, worn almost to the texture of a cob-web, clung so close to her attenuated form, that it was evident, that even on that cold evening of early spring, the poor creature had not a sufficiency of under-clothing; and the old shawl, discoloured with frequent washings, was likewise worn too thin to make up for other deficiencies of clothing.

A more woe-begone picture of utter misery than this poor creature it would have been hard to imagine. Her ungloved hands were like those of a skeleton with the skin drawn over them, her lips were pale and her cheeks sunk, and a livid bruise round the left eye was evidently the result either of a fall or some personal brutality. But though the wasted form; the worn features of that wretched woman told a tale of famine, her face wore a yet more mournful expression than any that physical want alone, however sharp, would have imprinted there. Confusion, sorrow, remorse, the consciousness, perhaps, of having met with the due reward of an ill-spent life, was visible in her haggard looks, her timorous wandering glances.

The lawyer, with the habitual keenness of his profession, noted these terrors, and in a firm but not unkind voice, he said, "Be not alarmed; you have nothing to fear now if you reveal the whole truth; you shall not return to be exposed again to the brutality of your husband if you make a full and free confession, but you must be aware that it is only through the most candid avowals on your part, that Miss Forester can be rescued from the peril in which she has generously, but ~~un-~~ *wittingly*, placed herself."

"I know that, sir," answered the woman, "and when I came to you three nights ago, before Miss Forester set off on this unfortunate journey, I told you truly when I said, that I, and even my husband, were less wicked than the person who employed us. I can well guess, too, who it is that has persuaded Miss Forester to this journey, and for those persons, she would not, I am sure, have any harm from them; but they are desperate creatures she has gone among, smugglers and wreckers, and her pretty face may bring her into worse danger than a purse of gold could do!"

The Earl of Alverston uttered an exclamation of anguish as the woman ceased speaking, but the lawyer, cool and cautious, took a pen and a slip of paper, and asked the woman whether she could give an explicit direction to the place whither she supposed that Emily had been beguiled.

"I do not suppose, sir," answered the woman, "that the poor prisoner has been removed from St. Edith's, a little hamlet on the coast, not far from Tregoney, where he was first taken, and if he be there still, there, doubtless, Miss Emily has gone."

"Great Heaven, what is to be done?" ejaculated the Earl, rising from his seat. "Oh, Emily, rash, unfortunate girl, what may not be your fate ere a friend can reach you!"

"Courage, my lord, and patience," said the lawyer. "By what this woman says, Miss Forester, and the persons in whose company she is, cannot have left London many hours; and they have not the advantage of very well-filled purses to secure expeditious travelling, therefore I think that you may reach St. Edith's as soon as they; and my advice would be, that we set out with all expedition, taking with us two experienced officers from London, and obtaining the assistance of some of the coast-guard or military at the nearest garrison town!"

"That would certainly be as well, sir," said the woman; "but indeed you must be careful, for they are desperate men among whom you are going to venture; and if you do not deal quietly with them at first, it is as likely as not that they



would risk all consequences, and kill both their poor prisoner and Miss Emily, out of pure rage and fury."

"Oh, miserable woman!" said the Earl, "see how impossible it is to say, thus far will I sin and no further. I well believe you thought not of—you did not know, the foulness of crime to which you were instigated by that female fiend who was your temptress and employer; that you thought, even, there was a certain virtue in preserving her poor victim from the full horror of the fate she had designed; but that very endeavour on your part to sin only by halves, may end in the final destruction, not only of the person you meant to save, but of the innocent Emily herself!"

"Spare me, my lord," said the woman, shedding tears. "I have indeed heavily sinned, but am I not heavily punished?"

"Poor creature!" exclaimed Alverston, the natural generosity of his temper interposing in behalf of the wretched object before him, "you are indeed punished. I should not, but for the information previously given to me by Mr. Price, have recognised in you the comely woman I knew when I was a boy. Pardon me, you are indeed an object for pity, rather than reproach."

"Let us hope too, my lord," said Mrs. Price gravely, "that her repentance is not too late, and that we shall yet rescue dear Emily, and the poor prisoner on whose behalf she has placed herself in so much peril. I am not fond of thinking that the wicked finally triumph, though they may oppress the virtuous for a long while."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

"Lo! these are they, whose souls the furies steel'd."

POPE.

*If the belief expressed by Mrs. Price, that the triumph of the wicked is in general of temporary duration, was founded on an accurate observation of life, the same observation will*

not fail to show also, as she said, that their triumph often seems for a time complete, and lasts longer than the frailty of human nature in the person wronged, can always patiently endure.

If the friends of Emily were on the alert, her foes were no less so. It needed not the caustic remarks of Mrs. Price to alarm the coward conscience of Mrs. Danby. The mother of Emily did not feel a more acute anxiety, as to the cause and object of her sudden and secret journey, than did her intriguing aunt.

A guilty conscience is ever on the alert, it takes alarm at a word or look, and a proceeding much less remarkable in itself, than was Emily's abrupt departure, would have been sufficient to alarm Mrs. Danby. Her apprehensions, her terrors, were too ill concealed to escape the detection of Julia Barton, to whom they appeared to furnish an opportunity to extort from her aunt a fuller confidence than she had yet, with all her audacity and craft, been able to obtain.

The wedding day of Julia, then, was spent, not in an innocent trip into the country, accompanied only by her husband, but in the semi-obscurity of her aunt's private apartment, where Mrs. Danby, who had retired there under the not feigned infliction of a violent headache, lay extended on a couch, and amid sobs and tears, and bitter exclamations, not of sorrow or remorse, but of guilty fears, made her still more crafty niece acquainted with the whole web of her iniquities.

Julia was very bold, and though in her own mind she admitted that Mrs. Danby's position was one of exceeding peril, she endeavoured to buoy up her spirits, and assure her that the danger she contemplated might either be avoided altogether, or made, after all, to settle on the head of Emily Forester.

"Leave it to me, dear aunt," she said, "I will manage. I should have saved you much uneasiness if you could have prevailed on yourself to trust me more fully; a half confidence is of no use, and I am sure you have had no reason to mistrust me. If you had but told me all sooner, I would have

settled that villain, Gregson—you have submitted to him too quietly."

"Oh, my dear Julia, take care," exclaimed Mrs. Danby, raising herself from the couch, and discovering thereby, her eyes swollen with weeping, and every feature of her face distorted by the extremity of her fears. "Oh, have a care, Julia! you know not what a desperate wretch that man is; you have not known him so long as I have."

"Truly, no," answered Julia; "if I had, my dear aunt, I would by this time have managed him better. It would have been for some time past that the position he has been holding would have been reversed, and, instead of his playing the master as he has done, he would have been the slave."

"I know not how you would have made him so," replied Mrs. Danby; "he is a man of iron determination; he would yield to none, least of all to those whose folly, alas, perhaps I should say guilt, has placed them in his power."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Julia. "I know the person, though, to whom he would yield at once."

"You are too confident, Julia!" responded Mrs. Danby, in a melancholy tone.

"Not at all," replied Julia, "you shall see that in my hands the wolf whom you fear shall become as quiet as a lamb, and the rod with which I shall tame him, will be the threat of placing him in the hands of justice."

"Heaven defend me, Julia, are you mad!" ejaculated Mrs. Danby; "you cannot fail to know such a step would ensure my destruction."

"Not at all, my dear aunt," replied Julia, "for Gregson would never suffer me to execute such a threat, guilty as I am certain he is, and as I shall boldly charge him with being, in a much greater degree than you are."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Danby.

"Simply what I say, my dear aunt," replied Julia, "that if Mr. Gregson had not exceeded his instructions, he would not be so chary of detection as he himself evidently is. But you

have acted very foolishly, aunt, and have trusted too many low agents ; if you had honoured me with your confidence on choice, as you have at last done on compulsion, the whole affair would have been better managed."

"Oh, you think yourself so clever, Julia," petulantly cried Mrs. Danby, who was somewhat tired of the self-laudation of her niece.

"Clever, or not, aunt," answered Julia, "you must own that the plan I have proposed for you is better than any you thought of for yourself; and it is a little hard, when I have sacrificed all my own pleasure and comfort for you, and risked getting into all kind of disagreeable scrapes about that business of Emily and the Earl, that you should find fault and look cross, at the very moment when I am undertaking fresh trouble, and even peril, on your account. Indeed, aunt, there are very few women who would spend this very day in such a fashion as I shall spend it in."

Julia did not exaggerate in this last assertion, for there are indeed few ladies who spend a wedding-day in the fashion in which her's was spent; for, however wickedly disposed women in general may be, there are few, for the comfort of the rest of the world, possessed of quite so active a spirit of mischief as that which animated Julia, who, after this conversation with her aunt, again proceeded to town.

About the same time, then, that the Earl of Alverston, Mrs. Price, and her son, were in consultation with the woman who was their informant respecting the whereabouts of Emily, Julia Barton, or rather Mrs. Warrender, was seated in no less close consultation with the man Gregson, at his lodgings, in an obscure street in the neighbourhood of Holborn.

The apartment of this worthy, however, though situated in so low a neighbourhood, was by no means deficient in a kind of coarse comfort. The Kidderminster carpet, though somewhat faded, was not worn; the old-fashioned black mahogany was well polished; a good fire blazed in the ~~urn~~

and on the table were abundance of appliances to comfort, in a knuckle of ham, a new loaf and fresh butter, the fragrant steam from the teapot, and the more potent odour of the best brandy, which issued from a bottle from which Mr. Gregson had just drawn the cork.

Mr. Gregson's own appearance, too, was as comfortable as that of his room; neither in aspect or apparel did he resemble the forlorn object that he was, when he presented himself at the house of Mrs. Danby in the winter. His person had become plump, and his face assumed that glowing tint which is not an unfrequent result of too strong an attachment to the liquor, of which he now poured a brimming glass into his cup of tea.

Greatly improved, however, as was the condition of Mr. Gregson, he was not altogether the person whom a fashionably-dressed lady might have been expected to visit; and Julia, who never lost her regard for appearances, had wrapped herself up in a dark plain shawl, and concealed her face with a thick veil for the occasion. Mr. Gregson was both cunning and bold, but he was not quite a match for her; and he had been so far embarrassed by her close questioning, that he was imbibing with his tea a somewhat larger quantity of brandy than was usual, for the purpose either of raising his courage or sharpening his wits, and was just approaching that state of semi-intoxication, in which the tongue has not unfrequently twisted a cord for the neck, and which especially exposed him to Julia's mode of attack, which consisted, for the most part, in a bold assumption of the very facts, the existence of which she desired to ascertain.

"Well, now!" exclaimed Gregson, rolling his little gray eyes at Julia, with an expression that would have alarmed some women, and which disgusted even her. "Well, now, my dear, you is a clever young woman, and no mistake; that's just what I thinks—rale truth, and no flummery whatsoever. And, so you has got it all out of the old 'uns! Well, I never! Who would have thought that she would

have confessed! I should have said—not, by no manner of means, not even if she had the rope round her neck—I should have said she was a game one, and would die as such; but you is the rale game one! Life of me! but I am sorry that I am plagued with a dangling old wife, for I admires your sperrit, my dear, and, if so be as I had been a single man, I would have offered to marry you. Oh, don't look scornful! we should have managed very well, my dear. The devil is in it, if, between us, we could not have made Mother Danby give up the whole fortin, and retire on a pension. We would have allowed her two hundred a year, or so; just to keep the wolf from the door."

"I have not come here to talk or listen to mere nonsense, Mr. Gregson," said Julia, fixing her black eyes on the man with that savage glare, which had so often startled her own family into compliance with her will, "but to recommend you to a serious consideration, as to what is to be done to prevent, not only Mrs. Danby, but you also, from standing at the bar of the Old Bailey, where, I shrewdly suspect, your position would be more unpleasant even than hers."

"In what respect, my good lady?" inquired Gregson.

"Because," answered Julia, coolly, "my aunt neither planned nor executed anything worse than forgery, robbery, and imprisonment; while, from your obstinate refusal, even at the time that you were extorting from her large sums, to disclose the place where you kept the prisoner concealed, the presumption is fair, that you have hidden him in the grave itself, as you could not have apprehended anything from Mrs. Danby's knowledge of his existence, because his restoration to society must prove even more injurious to her than to you, inasmuch as, from her position, the obloquy of the crime would be greater. But what is far more important, on the money question—the prime one after all—she would, in the event of discovery, lose thousands, where you could count but pounds."

"Very well argued, Miss," said the man, "and quite ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup>."

firms my opinion of you as a clever woman; but now, my dear, since you speak so plain on the one hand, be a little candid on the other, and tell me plainly what is up—what there is fresh in the wind, because you see I am not to be imposed upon, and I know that, after all, Madam Danby must have been in some terrible frustration to let out such a story about her queer tricks to you; so be plain now with me, my dear, and I will be plain with you. What is the matter?"

"I have not the slightest objection to inform you," returned Julia; "and to waste no time, which is at the present moment a precious commodity, I must tell you that Miss Emily Forester has strangely and suddenly quitted her home, leaving behind her letters for her mother and the Earl of Alverston, which speak of some mysterious and important duty to be fulfilled by this strange flight, which Mrs. Danby's fears, and my suspicions, certainly have connected with the very serious matters, or rather, I may say, the transporting and hanging matters, in which you and she have been concerned."

The countenance of the man faded from the purple red of intoxication which it had been assuming, to the livid whiteness of a corpse while Julia spoke, and this whiteness was the more horrible from the effect produced by the wild malignant glare of his deep set gray eyes, and the grinding of his teeth. Even the bold Julia quailed before the fury of his looks, and involuntarily edged her chair a pace or two back.

"Do not be alarmed, young lady!" said Gregson, with a laugh that in its hoarse and hollow tone was as frightful as his looks. "Do not be alarmed! Well, I am in a rage, that's a fact; but it is not with you. No, no, I thanks you; and so, for the matter of that, may Madam Danby, for putting me on my guard. I knows, I guesses where Miss Forester is gone—the devil give her good of her journey; and for them who sent her there, I'll brain them—I'll brain them with my own hand!"

"Who then, do you think, has put her on this journey?" inquired Julia.

"Who should, who could have put her on it, but my hell-cat of a wife!" answered Gregson. "Though, to be sure, there is another, too, who might think, by playing soft and sorrowful with Miss Forester, to get the whip hand of Mrs. Danby and me."

"Well! but the remedy—the remedy! can you not find one?" demanded Julia impatiently. "Can you not tell or learn whither Miss Forester is gone? I have one," and here the voice of Julia subsided to a bitter and chuckling accent, "I have one who will pursue her with the best will in the world, and with all the secrecy and revenge we can desire—a disappointed lover, a man whose advances she has treated with contempt, and whom the sting of disappointed vanity urges much more than that which it pleases him to term love!"

"I will be plain with you, young lady, as you have been so with me," answered Gregson, "and above all, because if, as you assert, Miss Forester has really set out in secret for the country, I can guess the direction of her journey, and it will be useless for me or Mrs. Danby longer to play at cross purposes with each other. Miss Forester has doubtless gone to Cornwall, where, whether the disappointed lover you spoke of chooses to follow her or not, I certainly will, first settling accounts with Ruth, my jade of a wife, whose lodgings I will visit to-night, and who must have been somehow concerned in this treachery!"

"In Cornwall, then," said Julia, "we are to consider are to be found the proofs of those transactions which, on becoming known to the world, would alike ruin Mrs. Danby and the agents she has employed."

"Yes, madam, in Cornwall," answered the man; "there is to be found the person entrusted by Mrs. Danby to my care. I have not committed murder, madam; it is a crime too dangerous, it does not pay."

"Perhaps not," said Julia, dryly; "and depend upon it that secrets between persons who have dealt together as you and



my aunt have done, pay as little. It was extremely absurd to conceal from her the place where you kept the prisoner; I cannot divine your motive."

"I should have thought you might," answered the man, "so clever as you are; you surely might know, that when people are in our power, the best way to hold it is to keep them in a fret and a fright."

"There is something in that, to be sure," answered Julia. "But now, what do you propose? The gentleman of whom I have spoken to you is as well disposed against Miss Forester as we could possibly desire, and Cornwall of all others is the county, in visiting which she may best help out his design, for he has there a small estate, and a large old diurnal house, the best possible place for all our purposes, and to which indeed, when I saw him this afternoon, he proposed to convey Miss Forester; and it struck me, if Mrs. Danby's prisoner still lived, the place would be not an unsuitable abode for him either."

"A pretty notion, too, that is," replied Gregson; "and then, you know, Miss Forester and the other prisoner could amuse themselves together! Poor little girl! So this affronted lover lives in Cornwall, does he? Why, she is like the pretty fly then, walking into the net of the spider; for, sparing only time to see my wife and make her come with me, I will be ready, Miss, to start for Cornwall by to-night's train."

Nothing could be more satisfactory to Julia than this news, and she delayed only to arrange with Gregson what disguise should be assumed, and for his meeting with Captain Seymour, who was of course the lover of Emily to whom she alluded, ere she again set out for the abode of that gallant and honourable person, with whom she held an interview of nearly an hour, returning to Wimbleton at near midnight, when she hurried to Mrs. Danby's chamber to inform her that Captain Seymour and Gregson, with his wife in company, were already in pursuit of Emily, and that probably her lonely expedition to Cornwall would result, not only

in the total ruin or even death of the person whom she meant to save, but in the irreparable destruction of that fair and unimpeachable fame of which all the cruelty of the world had not sufficed to deprive her.

In talking over their bad hopes, Mrs. Danby and Julia grew almost confident of their attainment, and kissed and bade each other good night with such an air, that a bystander would have supposed that they were rejoicing over the performance of some virtuous action. Indeed, to their confused conceptions, vice almost changed aspects with virtue. Mrs. Danby persuaded herself that she was a very injured woman, and Julia laid all the bad deeds she committed to an anxiety to relieve the mind of her aunt, and therefore she rested quite content with the part of deceit and cruelty which she had played on her "WEDDING DAY."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

"For oh! to me fatality appears  
Wrapt in a chilling veil of gloom and mists,  
Nor seems one that, or star,  
To deck her furrowed brow."

MRS. OPPE.

A soft, hazy, spring evening was just beginning to descend over a hamlet on the coast of Cornwall; but, while a thin blue mist crept slowly upwards, the crimson glories of the setting sun yet lingered in the west, touching the pointed gables of the cottages with a cheerful glow, and flinging a rubied tint upon the moss and lichens, and bare, weather-beaten summits of the rocks that overhung them. For this village, as is not uncommon in that wild and picturesque county, was nestled, as it were, in a hollow of the hills, like an oasis amid a desert, green and pleasant, contrasting alike vividly in the luxuriance of its vegetation, its profusion of flowers and shrubs, with the rugged hills which lowered so frowningly above it, and the wide, pathless expanse of the ocean that stretched before it.

for on that coast, the base of one cliff was the summit of another, and the flat, or hollow, on which the hamlet was built, was bound seaward by rocks, that descended in frightful precipices to the beach, which was itself reached by a circuitous path, which none, save the hardy fishermen and smugglers, would have attempted. Nothing could be more lovely than the aspect of the village on such a fair spring evening as that described; with the wide ocean stretching below it, resplendent in the sunset, its long, heaving, swelling waves looking like sheets of molten copper, edged with pearls; while the village itself, with its cottages, the walls of which were composed of the white, chalky-looking stones which were scattered about the rocks and on the beach below, looked a very abode of comfort and innocence, those white walls contrasting with the dark foliage of the myrtle and arbutus, or the gray leaves of the lavender, which, in the mild air of the county, flourished with a luxuriance almost equal to that with which they grow in Southern Europe. In the moist atmosphere of Cornwall, too, each little patch of turf had a veritable hue of the emerald, that might have tempted Titania and her court to their midnight dance. In the little gardens, too, the air was fragrant with the blossoms of the apple trees, which looked like huge bouquets of pinks, sprinkled with tiny buds of green, while below them the dead white and pale yellow of the strawberry bloom contrasted with its dark and beautiful foliage.

Domestic appliances of comfort, too, did those cottages contain, which might scarcely have been expected in that remote district. In most of them there was a goodly supply of presses and bedsteads, chairs, and tables of right old walnut-wood, such as the peasants of other districts rejoiced in a hundred years ago; there, too, were snowy curtains of dimity, and good blankets and Holland sheets; while some of them had even the clean-washed brick or boarded floor of the sitting-room covered with a carpet, while still more modern pieces of mingled comfort and finery, in the shape of

a mirror in a gilt frame, or a work-box or tea-caddy for the wife, had found their way.

That tea-caddy, too, was no useless appurtenance; it was in general filled with the finest Bohea and Souchong, with the fragrant odour of which, as it smoked in the little old-fashioned cups, at the hour of the evening meal, was usually mingled the more potent smell of right Hollands or Cognac, flowing pure from the keg. No lack was there either of more substantial blessings on the boards of the inhabitants of that village; there was abundance of fish, dried and fresh; white bread, butter, cream, and the delicious honey yielded by the bees, who drew their stores from the wild thyme and aromatic shrubs that grew luxuriantly in the clefts of the rocks; there also were hams, sometimes the produce of Westphalia, with other foreign delicacies which would by a stranger have been regarded with some surprise, as being found on the tables of mere fishermen and peasants.

That surprise would have ceased, however, on but a brief acquaintance with the dwellers in those cottages, and an observance of the contrast between the comforts that surrounded them—their well-furnished abodes and well-spread tables, their new and tight, and sometimes even gaudy and expensive attire—and their scowling brows, their sullen or ferocious looks, their deep oaths, and deadly malignity against each other. Very brief indeed would have been the space of time necessary to discover that the paradise of nature was turned by the crime of man into a hell; that that green and lovely spot was tainted by being made the residence of the vilest of wretches, those who, for the lucre of gain, would murder in cold blood—slay the unfortunates whom the tempest and the rocks had spared; for the inhabitants of that village, the village of St. Edith, while affecting to pursue only the harmless occupation of fishermen, were known for the most desperate smugglers and wreckers on that line of coast. All that appearance of prosperity and comfort, then, was delusive—the shining skin and gay variegated tints of :

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the serpent. Very hollow too, and uncertain, was the prosperity of the inhabitants of St. Edith's, for they were reckless and improvident, as the wicked always are; and a temporary cessation of their ill-got gains, a mild season, when few or no wrecks were thrown upon the coast, or when a run of ill-luck had attended the smugglers, the fury of want would contend among them with the fury of crime; and, deprived of the means of indulging in their habit of drinking and feasting, they would turn their hands against each other, so that, in the attempt of those who had been unlucky to obtain a share of the stores of the more fortunate, desperate frays would often ensue, frays in which life itself had been, in more than one instance, the forfeit. The fishermen of St. Edith's, however, as they chose to be called, though they so often quarrelled among themselves, had the sense or cunning to preserve a most strict bond of union against the rest of the world. The most desperate among them would not have betrayed a comrade to the common enemy, a revenue officer, or a division of the coast-guard; and so perilous were, on every side, the approaches to St. Edith's, so remote its situation, and so cunning the inhabitants in the prosecution of their vile trade, that they had hitherto defied the endeavours of the authorities to break up their iniquitous league, the village still apparently flourished, and, in contra-distinction to its proper name, had obtained from one of the coast-guard, who had narrowly escaped from it with his life, the ominous title of the "Devil's Nest."

Cornwall, however, seems to have been, in old times, the very country of saints; there is scarce a village, a mountain, or remarkable feature throughout its wide extent, which does not bear the name of some person remarkable for holiness. So far, however, is the present age from producing saints, that it repudiates the very name of them. And no wonder; for saints, according to their legends, appear to have been a disagreeable, intractable people, with certain odd notions of what they called right and wrong, which notions were not

money would induce them to swerve from. And if saints are now held by the inhabitants of great cities to have been either fools or mad, it is no wonder that a saint should lose her credit in a little out-of-the-way hamlet, on the coast of Cornwall; and St. Edith's Chapel, that curious little moss-grown specimen of ancient art, nestling among the hills, and St. Edith's Well, famous in its time almost as that of St. Winifred, should, alas, have been suffered to fall into decay, by the very degenerate inhabitants of St. Edith's village.

Cornwall abounds in ancient remains, not only Druidical but Christian. Perhaps the chapel of St. Edith had been one of the very earliest stone buildings of its class, it was so very solid, and so very unpretending, with its walls constructed of huge blocks of granite, that, though thickly garbed with moss, would no more yield to time or weather, than would the solid rock in which its foundation was cut. Four massive pillars on either side had once supported the roof of this chapel, which, as the frailest portion of the building, had long since given way—a small portion alone remaining at the east end, where the altar, a solid block of stone, was also entire. The niche above it, which had once been filled by a rudely carved statue of the saint, was, however, empty; for, though the virtue of the inhabitants of the near village could tolerate wrecking and smuggling, it would not endure with an image of a saint.

St. Edith's Chapel, then, which stood upon a grassy space, among the rocks immediately above the village, was a pretty and picturesque object in itself, and from its elevation presented an excellent prospect of the surrounding country. The stern and lesson, too, which the decay of his own works reads to the heart of man, was impressively delivered by that crumbling roof tree; those massive columns, garlanded with ivy, and wreathed with moss—that vacant niche, and long deserted altar. A theme for melancholy thoughts it was to remember how many generations had passed away, and

forgotten, since first that humble altar was raised amid the lonely hills. There was a mournfulness about that simple ruin, even when the dying sunbeam glinted through its wreathing ivy, and sparkled on the fount that still bubbled near its doorway. And little food for sad thoughts did the two young females require, who, arm in arm, approached the ruin on that fair spring evening referred to. They were simply but neatly dressed, and, so far as their garments were concerned, might have been supposed to belong to the class of small traders in a town, or farmers of a similar grade in the country. They were both well looking, too; but a second glance would have shown that the slighter and younger of the two had that air of refinement, and quiet dignity, which education can alone bestow, and that she belonged to that class of females who, irrespective of their pecuniary position, are, truly and essentially, ladies. Her beauty, too, was of a more delicate character than that of her companion; for though the latter had not the colour, emulating rather the tint of the peony than the rose, which usually distinguishes the lower class of women resident in the country, yet there was a touch of coarseness in her features, from which those of the lady were totally free. The countenance of the latter, indeed, was a perfect specimen of tender, and yet intellectual, feminine loveliness. The brow, from which the dark brown hair was so smoothly folded, was so very pure and pale, and so beautifully formed, that it might have become a Grecian statue. Then there was such softness in the large liquid hazel eyes, fringed with lashes black as ebony, and so long, that when the eyes were cast down they seemed to rest upon the cheek, and admirably relieved its soft shell-like pink. The nose was small and straight, the chin delicately rounded; in the mouth a captious critic might have proved a fault, in asserting that the lips, though well cut, were scarcely so full and pouting as connoisseurs in beauty would have required. This defect, however, if such it was, *did not detract* from the sweetness of the smile, while it in-

creased the intelligence of the whole face, and adorned it with an expression of purity, in which the full lip is almost uniformly wanting.

The usually pensive expression of Emily Forester's face—for she was the superior of the two visitants to St. Edith's Chapel—was now, however, increased to a look of nervous sorrow and anxiety, as entering the ruined chapel she seated herself with her companion, on the stone steps of the little altar. "Oh, dear Cicely!" she said, "what terror I have been in lest one of the children should be sent by that woman Tregear to accompany us in our walk. Alas, Cicely, I fear there is some treachery at work! Are you not uneasy at this continued absence of your husband?"

"No, dear young lady!" answered the woman, who was, indeed, no other than the wife of the man Mills, "I fear nothing more than the delay, and knowing how great must be your anxiety, I do most heartily desire that was put an end to; I had hoped that we should be on our way back to London by this time."

"So indeed did I," answered Emily, "and with the poor prisoner in our charge. Oh, Cicely, do you think he is really safe? An apprehension has crossed me more than once that his cruel wrongs have killed him; that the story of his removal was a mere frivolous pretext. They tell us he has been conveyed to a place of greater safety, which means, of more secure imprisonment, but surely his age, his infirmities, and sufferings would have kept him securely here."

"Dear young lady, you distress yourself needlessly," replied Cicely. "Depend upon it, beyond the mere circumstance of his imprisonment, the old man has not been ill used, for though Black Will is not a very pleasant person to look at, he never was cruel without an object to gain, and when he gives you his word you may rely upon it. No, Miss Forester, I do not fear for my Harry, though Will has taken him into the secret haunt of the men of St. Edith's. Though a bad man, Will is not a hypocrite; besides he is a bold man, and any mischief ~~he~~



he chooses to have a hand in, he does not fear to own; therefore, since he said that Harry should come back safe and sound, and the old man along with him, I do not fear but that he will do so; and upon that thought I keep up my spirits, so do you try and keep up your spirits too, for you look quite ill."

As Cicely spoke thus, she observed a dark shadow cross the line of light from the dying sunbeams that darted through the dismantled doorway of the chapel, and throw, for a moment, an extra gloom athwart the spot where she and Emily were seated; by Emily the circumstance was unnoticed, as she sat mournfully with her head leaning on her hand. Cicely, though for a moment startled, did not mention the circumstance, lest she should increase the apt fears of her companion; besides that, on a second thought, she concluded that the shadow might have been occasioned merely by a passing cloud. She went on, therefore, in her humble fashion, endeavouring

to administer consolation to Emily, whose great anxiety she knew was not only as to the success of her errand in this, perhaps ill judged, journey, but also on account of her mother and the Earl of Alverston. "To be sure," then said Cicely, "it is hard, that we all know, Miss, to be separated from one's mother and one's true lover, especially such a dear, good mother, and such a fine, noble gentleman, a great lord such as your lover is. But then you know too, Miss, everybody, great and small, have their trials, and I am sure you would never have been happy, in a selfish way, to be a countess, and know that you had left a poor old soul to die of a broken heart, in a solitary place like this, away from all his friends, through the lies, and plots, and money-making of a bad woman, for whom the gallows would be too good. Oh! you would not have liked that, Miss, I am sure; you could not have done it."

"Indeed," replied Emily, smiling through the tears which Mrs. Mills' mention of her mother and the Earl had drawn into her eyes,—*"indeed, my dear Cicely, you are right; I would not indeed have been happy hardly, if I had abandoned*

my worst foe to such a life-long imprisonment, and certainly not when the victim is one of my best friends; but the truth is, Cicely, the bravest of us are poor, weak creatures after all, and though we may have courage enough to execute our duty, we have not the courage to refrain from regretting the sacrifices which that duty compels us to make; we want impossibilities, and to tread that path straight and easy which we are warned is narrow and full of thorns. I own my weakness to you, Cicely; I fear much for the anxiety of my poor mother, and more for the construction which the Earl of Alverston will put upon my absence; with my false cousins, too, ever on the watch, as I know they will be, to suggest to him the vilest suspicions. And with these thoughts, too, comes the fear that I have destroyed myself in vain. Oh! this suspense is very bitter, it is unendurable; when, when will it be terminated!"

"At once, charming Emily," cried a voice in answer to that ejaculation; and at the same time the shadow, which Cicely had before observed, again darkened the doorway, and a man stepping forwards into the chapel, seized the affrighted Emily in his arms.

"Nay," exclaimed this person, "it is in vain you struggle pretty one; though you beat yourself to death, you cannot escape; you had better therefore take the advice of this philosophical little woman in your company, and make yourself happy in the thought that you have done with the pedant, Alverston."

Amazement, terror, and indignation, choked the voice of Emily, as her captor, while thus speaking, forced her towards the door of the chapel; but then, when in the light that yet streamed over the mountains, she recognised the person of her hated persecutor, Seymour, and perceived a close carriage standing at the foot of the hill, she uttered one loud cry of hopeless anguish, and fell back in a dead swoon.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"Knavery's plain face is never seen till used."

OTHELLO

WHEN Emily recovered her senses, it was, amid her distress and terror, a temporary relief that Captain Seymour was not an occupant of the carriage in which she was being conveyed rapidly along; for though she could not contemplate more than a brief respite from his odious presence, she felt a few minutes even might be of consequence to collect her thoughts, and determine on what line of conduct to pursue.

Emily, however, was not alone in the carriage; she was supported when she recovered from her swoon by a man, who, as far the imperfect light enabled her to judge, was of coarse, and even brutal appearance, a judgment which was confirmed by the grating, vulgar tones of his voice, for the voice is a very significant note of character.

"Oh," he exclaimed, as Emily raised herself with a deep sigh, and leaned with a bewildered air towards the window of the carriage, "so you pretends to have come to yourself again, does you? Now I tells you what it is, my lass, these here squeamish tricks won't do for me; you will have to get out of this comfortable berth presently, and if so be as you comes your faintings when riding a rough journey over the Cornwall hills, down you'll go to a certainty, and as it is no part of my bargain with Captain Seymour to break my neck for the money he has paid me, if you does chance to fall, I shall not follow you over the rocks, which I promise you are not quite so soft as a feather bed."

"You know not how little I value your threats," exclaimed Emily, bitterly; "to perish by a fall from the rocks, would be, in my esteem, a fate far preferable to that of falling into the hands of Captain Seymour, whose enmity is the more cruel that it is unprovoked."

"Nonsense, gal, you don't know what you are talking

about," said the man, with a hoarse chuckle. "Lors, do you think I don't know it is all very fine talking? but pretty gals, such as you is, doesn't mind to go killing themselves, by tumbling down rocks or any other fashion; and what's more, they doesn't mean to do it. I is aware of the ways of the sex, my dear—I is aware of them; and as I told the Captain, in course you must talk big at first, and make a fuss, and pretend as you'd take poison, if you had it, and such like—in course it would not be jinteel if you didn't; but never mind that, Captain, says I, it will be all a sham, just put on for the sake of appearances, and when you shows her the reason of the thing, and the position she will be placed in, she will soon be the tenderest and quietest little dove in the world, and even thank you for running away with her."

To this offensive tirade, Emily did not vouchsafe a reply, but fixing her eyes on the window, watched anxiously for the rising of the moon, that she might obtain a glimpse of the road along which she was being conveyed, and also of her companion. The gentleman, however, seemed to take her silence as a proof of contempt, for finding that she made him no answer, he presently exclaimed, "Oh, its dumb saucy you are, is it? Now that's not jinteel, my dear, nor for the matter of that, politic neither, since it is in my power to do you an ill turn at the place we are going to, or be your friend or foe as it pleases me."

"Alas!" exclaimed the forlorn Emily, "how can you be my friend? If you were really such, you would release me—you would hurry me back to those who are in reality my friends."

"Why, my darling, now you would go for too much," said the man; "that's the worst of you women, you are not contented with a fellow showing just a little reasonable allowance of pity, but you want him directly to play false to his employers and his own interest into the bargain. Now I tell you what it is, pretty one, take a fool's advice for the future; don't you trouble yourself with being charitable, and kind, and that sort of gammon, but just look after number one; that's

the only way to be even with the world, my dear. Don't you care for nobody—nobody cares for you; if you'd a stuck to that principle, you'd a been safe. What need had you to care for anybody, when you was a going to be married to a great rich nobleman, an Earl? Why need you have frustrated yourself about what had become of yon old lying curmudgeon, who had behaved mortal ill to you, after all? and though to be sure it was hard to see the old ooman, Mrs. Danby, keep so tight hold of the money which you ought to have had, yet you would have been pretty well even with her when you was married to the rich young Earl."

"You know my relations, then—my Aunt Danby!" exclaimed Emily.

"To be sure I does," answered Gregson, for it was no other than he, into whose hands Emily had fallen. "To be sure I does. I have been of use to her in many little matters before this; in course she couldn't have managed her business without me. Oh, she's a wonderful sharp ooman. She would be one too many for you, without that ere niece of hers, Miss Julia, to help her. I can tell you, my dear, there's been a great mistake in your conduct, all along; you have been a vast deal too good-natured, and good nature does not pay now-a-days, not at all. Why did you go for to let your Aunt Danby be about old Sir Matthew when he was ill, to wheedle or threaten him just at her pleasure? I wonders at you, or at your parents at any rate, for you was but young, poor thing, and could not have been expected to know the ways of the world—at any rates the women kind, which is a deal worse nor the men. And yet you or your parents, as I say, lets the artfullest woman in all England go about a silly sick old man! I knows all about it from Ruth Harrison, the Danbys' housekeeper at Elmwood."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Emily. "Bad, as unfortunately I know my Aunt Danby to be, she would not I believe have thought of such enormous guilt as she has perpetrated, but for the promptings of that old woman."

"Speak more respectful to a jintleman of his wife, my dear," said Gregson. "I must tell you that Ruth Harrison and I have been married some time."

"What, you!" exclaimed Emily, involuntarily shrinking closer into the corner of the carriage; "you the husband of the infamous Ruth, the aider and abetter in deeds of fraud and cruelty which should bring all engaged in them to transportation or the gibbet! Oh, what will become of me—what have I not to fear!"

"Neither more nor less than this, my dear," answered Gregson: "just to live for a little while at a nice little country house which your old lover Captain Seymour has down here in Cornwall, till you consents to marry him; because you see him and Mrs. Danby, or rather Miss Julia Barton, have comed to a bit of understanding as to how matters stands in regard of Sir Matthew and his fortin; and as Mrs. Danby was mortal frightened when she found as you had set off for the country, she thought, like a wise woman as she is, that if an even fifty thousand would induce the Captain to marry you, and so stop your mouth, it would be as well to get rid of a troublesome business that way; and that's the whole truth. The worst you have to expect is to marry the Captain, and no such bad lot for a young ooman after all; for he is a handsome fellow, and a jintleman, though he has run himself out a little at whist and écarté, so that the fifty thousand Mrs. Danby offers makes him think it worth while to be plagued with a wife. So now, my dear, since I have been so candid with you, just take things a bit quietly, and don't be imperlite, and call me names, such as wretch, and villain, and such like; 'cause why, while I am civil to you, you should be civil to me. I am a very good-natured dog when I am in a good humour, but if people puts me out of the way, I bites dreadful; and if so be as you are not civil, I shall be after teaching the Captain how to manage his wife the same way as I manages old Ruth."

"Miserable woman! it is true, then, that since her marri-

she has had little comfort in the profits of her wickedness," said Emily.

"Very imperlite again, my dear," returned Gregson; "but, as for the matter of Ruth, I must say I does keep her in order a little, that's what all you women must come to—the clever ones as well as the fools. You can't get on no ways without a husband, and then he shows his authority and keeps you in order. There's that Miss Julia, by-the-by; oh, she is a clever one; why she beats old mother Danby all to immortal smash; but for as clever as she is, let her get married, that's all; if her husband doesn't settle her shrew's temper, and her plotting and planning, the world will. It's all mighty fine while she is a young single ooman, with money in her pocket; but let her come to be a married one without it, as she needs must be if she marries, seeing as she is so ugly, and so sharp and cross in her manners, that no fellow would tie himself to her, except to get a little money by the job, and then he'll spend it as I did Ruth's, and give her a thumping now and then, or leave her without a dinner, all which will mend her and make her a better ooman, and she'll like him the better for it."

"You speak of Julia, as if she were acquainted with, and a party to, all the wickedness of Mrs. Danby," said Emily. "Is it possible she has been in her confidence? I have little cause to like Julia, but I expected not such atrocious conduct in a person so young."

"The more fool you, my dear, and shows how little knowledge you has of the world," answered Mr. Gregson; "'cause if you did know anything whatever about it, you would know as wicked young persons is more audacious than wicked old ones; they is a deal more rash, and never stops to consider consequences, which the old hands does. As to the matter of confidence between Miss Julia and Mrs. Danby, why there isn't much of that. The young lady, as I said, is mortal cunning, and she got, I scarce myself know how, into the secrets of the old un, I believe partly by guess, and partly by listening to

her talking with me the night as you were taken by Lord Alverston to the house in Belgrave Square; howsomever, Julia has at last wormed and frightened her aunt into telling her everything, and, my eyes, hasn't she kept a tight hand on the old woman ever since? hasn't she taken the lead in all this here business about you and all the rest?"

"For Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Emily, "spare me these details of a hatred which I have not deserved. It is dreadful to think that Julia should pursue me thus. Mrs. Danby had against me the malice which bad people always bear towards those whom they have injured, but Julia had against me no cause of provocation."

"Oh, gemini, hadn't she though!" ejaculated Mr. Gregson. "Upon my word, my dear, you is an innocent soul. Wasn't you younger than her, and wasn't you prettier, and wasn't you more accomplished in books, and music, and all kind of things? and wasn't all that reason enough for her to hate you? Oh, I have heard all about that from my wife, many a time; and often has she told me that she believed as them Bartons hated you, as that they would have put poison in your drink if they hadn't been afraid of the law, of the rope coming round their necks. So now take my advice, my dear, and when you is married to Captain Seymour, as in course you must be, because you hasn't no choice, don't you have nothing to do with the Bartons, or go for to think but that out of every ten women you meet, nine of them would cut your throat if they dared. Oh, the women is mortal cruel to each other, that there's no denying. You see all as you have suffered, my dear, comes from the hands of the women."

"I think not!" answered Emily. "If you see so clearly the wickedness that has been practised against me, wherefore do you take part in it? Oh, believe me, it is never too late either for man or woman to repent; show your regret now for the part that you have acted, restore me to my friends at St. Edith's, help them to liberate the poor dying prisoner, and I will engage not only that you shall be forgiven for the ~~same~~



but well rewarded for helping to redress so many cruel and unmerited wrongs."

"Very fine, my dear—very pretty; quite a speech for a play actress!" said Gregson, while the moon, which was now rising, streamed through the windows of the carriage, and discovered to Emily his harsh, and at the same time sinister, countenance. "All very pretty and romantic; but the fox is not quite so foolish as to walk into the kennel among the hounds. You see, I had rather too large a share in the matter of Sir Matthew to venture upon turning Queen's evidence; and if I did, I fancy the reward your friends, even the Earl himself, would give me, would not quite come up to what I shall get out of Mrs. Danby, for she is so thoroughly frightened now, that she would pay away half the fortune she has got hold of, quietly to keep the rest of it. Ten thousand, my darling, ten thousand sparkling shiners, the day I go back to London, and show the certificate of your marriage with Captain Seymour, and that all is safe about Sir Matthew. Oh, oh! I think I shall not play false to Madam Danby, upon the chance that your Earl, or you either, will part with such a sum, knowing that the law at best would give me a convict's dress and a free passage to Norfolk Island."

"Alas, alas!" exclaimed Emily, whose heart the unpromising aspect of the man, and the savage accent in which he pronounced the last words, filled with despair, "I am indeed lost then, for I never will be the wife of the villain Seymour! Oh, generous, noble Alverston, if you did but know my peril! Oh, why did I ever quit your protection!"

"Well, that was mortal stupid in you, Miss Emily, I must say," returned Gregson. "What did it matter to you to come, as I said to you just now, pranking after a person who had used you ill? Out of compassion and kindness, to be sure. He didn't deserve any pity from you, and now you have served yourself out for it, as people always does who is fools enough to look after anything but number one."

"And that unfortunate, for whose sake I have risked so

much," said Emily, "oh, what will become of him now! and my mother, and the Earl, what will they think of me!"

"As to the unfortunate," said Gregson, "he is an old fool, neither more nor less, and if you ask no questions about him, you will be told no fibs; and as to your mother and the Earl, well, you are not the first pretty girl that has deceived a mother and lover into the bargain. You can do something for your mother when you are married to Captain Seymour, and as to the Earl, he will, I daresay, soon find that one nice looking girl is as good as another, and there are plenty to be met with; so don't trouble yourself any more upon that point, my dear, for you will never see him again, at least, not till you are very safely made the wife of Captain Seymour; therefore, as we shall not come to our journey's end just at present, I advise you to make your mind easy, and take a nap, as I intend to do." With this last sapient remark, the worthy Mr. Gregson rolled himself up in a large cloak which he wore, and settling himself comfortably in a corner of the carriage, composed himself to repose, of which his olfactory organs soon gave notice in a fashion, which, if Emily had had any very agreeable theme of meditation, would certainly have disturbed it.

The excess, however, of her anxiety and grief, would have kept her waking and thoughtful amid silence the most profound, and now, as she remained with her eyes fixed on the wild road she was traversing, lighted up by the moonbeams, she had full leisure to consider her situation and its perils. Her first care was to examine if her purse still remained in her pocket. It did so, but alas, its contents were only a few shillings; she had not, therefore, the most potent means of defence, the means to purchase over the dependents of Captain Seymour. Bitterly now did Emily reproach herself for her unadvised journey to Cornwall; she even apprehended for a moment that Cicely and her husband might have been parties to the frauds of Gregson and Mrs. Danby, and her present capture; but she rejected the thought as soon as formed, remembering the uniform kindness and ~~kindness~~

affection expressed by Cicely, and the bitterness of remorse which her husband had shown for his share in the intrigues, or rather crimes, of Mrs. Danby. Emily remembered too, that wild and dissolute as were the inhabitants of St. Edith's, she had had no reason to complain during her brief residence among them; and rather, upon continued reflection, apprehended that Cicely and Mills would perhaps incur, on their own part, some deadly danger, than that they had any share in her present and new peril. It seemed, indeed, by what had been admitted by the man, Gregson, that Julia Barton and Mrs. Danby were in a league; and that, conjecturing from their own consciousness of crime, the cause of her absence from London, and the direction of her journey, they had therefore, by the bribe of a handsome fortune, induced Captain Seymour to participate and aid in the concealment of their enormous guilt.

One point, indeed, in their web of treachery and falsehood, still remained a mystery to Emily, and that was the knowledge which Mrs. Danby now appeared to possess of her victim's place of concealment in Cornwall, as Emily had understood from the man Mills, and Cicely, that Mrs. Danby had been left to imagine that this person whom she had injured so much, was imprisoned in a *maison de santé*, in France. Emily knew not, of course, that the circumstances of her journey had scared the man, Gregson, into a confession of facts, which, to serve his private interests, he had hitherto concealed, even from his employer, Mrs. Danby herself; and still less, that his wife, Ruth Harrison, who had formerly been housekeeper at Elmwood, had, like the man Mills, relented in the depth of the misery which the profligate habits of Gregson had brought upon her, and revealed to the lawyer, Mr. Price, so much of the machinations of Mrs. Danby, as put the Earl of Alverston on his guard against the slanders invented by Julia Barton, and sent him, though poor Emily knew it not, close on her track, to defend her, and foil the designs of her foes.

Unhappily, however, the visit of Julia Barton put Gregson also on his guard, so that when, after her departure, he visited the mean lodging of his wife, he pretended a sudden access of remorse or affection, and demanded that she should accompany him into the country, a demand which the woman, as weak as she was miserable and guilty, had the folly to assent to; a matter for little marvel on reflection, since the newspapers daily teem with instances of women, who after having been almost beaten to death by their husbands, will return to live with them, and interfere to screen them from the punishments of the law. Mrs. Gregson's folly, therefore, was no exception to the usual rule, and she received the usual, and it may almost be said, merited reward, in a more savage ill usage than she had yet received from her husband, when he had her at his mercy in the wilds of Cornwall; where, on the same day that he aided Captain Seymour in the abduction of Emily Forester, he consigned her to the keeping of one of the worst agents in his nefarious transactions with Mrs. Danby.

This combined folly and treachery of Mrs. Gregson delayed the proceedings of the Earl and Mr. Price, who expected her to return to them with further intelligence of Emily's probable route, and who, not seeing her, and moreover finding that she had quitted her lodging, in apparent harmony with her husband, would have been tempted to believe that her whole story was an imposture, had it not been borne out by many circumstances in the conduct of Mrs. Danby, and corroborated by the mystery in which Emily had involved her journey. Captain Seymour, however, had left town, and it required either the incentive of a most confiding love, or fierce jealousy, to urge the Earl to follow the counsel of Mr. Price, adopt a close disguise, and journey into Cornwall in pursuit of his truant betrothed.

Could poor Emily have known, however, that he was in pursuit of her, she would have endeavoured to subdue that bitterness of despair that fastened on her soul during her

lonely night journey, under the guardianship of Gregson; for, in the faith of her love, she would have believed nothing impossible to her lover; not even her own rescue from the present pressing danger.

Under circumstances of less moral danger, Emily, with her adventurous spirit and poetical taste, would have enjoyed that journey, during which so many varieties of scenery were exhibited by the pale but clear light of the May moon. Sometimes the way led through gentle vales, watered by bubbling streams, and verdant with the herbage that fed the countless flocks; at others, the horses toiled wearily up the steep hills, whose sides sunk down in awful precipices. Again, those hills stretched away in gloomy hollows—the yawning excavations of mines, the working of which had ceased centuries before. It was at the termination of a kind of wide gorge among these hills that the carriage stopped abruptly, and the coachman opening the door, gave notice to Emily and her companion that the ponies were in waiting to convey them the remainder of their journey. Thereupon Mr. Gregson roused himself from his slumbers with a growl, not unlike that which an ill-tempered mastiff might utter upon the same occasion; and complaining bitterly of the keenness of the night air, handed Emily out of the carriage, and assisted her to mount one of the little rough ponies, which, under the care of two men, were waiting beneath a ledge of rock.

On descending from the carriage, Emily naturally cast her eyes with some anxiety around her, and then found that she stood upon a wild heath, on which no vegetable production taller than the gorse and broom was to be seen. Gregson also noticed the flatness of the ground, and, with an oath, inquired of one of the men who were waiting with the ponies, why he and the young lady were to leave the comfortable carriage to travel on horseback through the cold night air, over ground more even than any they had passed. The reply was given by one of the men in the sing-song

dialect of the county, which was so unintelligible to Emily, that it was only on Gregson's explanation that she understood that the road would immediately diverge from the heath, and become too rough to be pursued in the carriage.

In effect, the ponies, briskly trotting over the heath, brought the party in a few minutes to a point where the ground again sank down in precipices as steep as those by which Emily had lately passed, while a subdued murmur convinced her that the sea was not far distant, and that throughout the journey her conductors had not greatly deviated from the line of the coast. After pursuing this road on the verge of the heath for a little time, the precipices again began to rise on either hand, till at last the path between them became so narrow that only two persons could ride abreast, and it would have been impossible for the carriage, which had returned on its route after Emily and Gregson had quitted it, to have passed through the gorge, which was so completely overarched by the rocks, that the slender strip of moonlight that streamed between them did not suffice to show the travellers their way, and the guides were compelled to kindle for that purpose the torches with which they were provided. This gorge finally terminated in a kind of cavern, where the flame of the torches, glaring on innumerable stalactites, created a scene of fairy splendour that, under other circumstances, Emily would have greatly admired. All the colours of the most gorgeous gems were there, roof and walls alike being covered with incrustations that shone either as sheets of purest crystal, or pendant clusters of rubies, sapphires, and emeralds. The floor of this cavern, too, was covered with a yellow shining sand, that sparkled as if it were so much gold dust.

On emerging from this cavern the party entered a wood, so impervious that the torches were still necessary to guide them on their way, while the ground, though slightly, began again to ascend. Thus some surprise was felt by Emily, when the wood suddenly opened, and she found herself with her companions at the foot of a high wall, from the vicinity of which :

the wood had been partially cleared. At a summons from her conductors, an iron door was then opened in this wall, and they were admitted by a man whom Emily knew to be the valet of Captain Seymour, because he had often been employed in conveying to her letters containing the declarations of that gentleman's dishonourable passion.

The insolent and familiar manner now assumed by this man, was regarded too by Emily as the harbinger of future insult. "Glad to see you, sweet Miss Forester," he said, with an air of mock respect; "my master is favoured by your visiting this out-of-the-way house of his; but you see, Miss Forester, he is a favourite of the ladies."

To this speech Emily condescended no reply, and after winding through a shrubbery, of which the paths were grass-grown, she was requested to dismount before a little iron gate, which appeared to be the entrance to an inner and ornamental garden. There the ponies were taken away by the men who had guided Emily and Gregson from the spot where they had left the carriage, and accompanied only by the latter and Holmes, the valet, Emily traversed the garden. This had once been very beautiful, and laid out in the fashion of the old time, but the grass and nettles had now grown up on the trim gravel paths; the fountains had ceased to play, and moss and weeds had sprung up about the stone basins, and covered the statues. "The garden flowers grown wild," however, still on that fine night loaded the passing breeze with their fragrance, and trailed their gay blossoms athwart the paths, while the lilac, laburnum, and Gueldres rose were in full bloom.

The mansion, which stood in the centre of this garden, was not very spacious; but it was built of stone, and evidently of some antiquity. The walls were strong, and the windows almost as narrow as loopholes, and altogether the style was somewhat oddly at variance with that of the garden that surrounded it. That mansion, however, Emily remembered stood in a wild and lonely district, probably at

some distance from any town, perhaps from any other habitation, and from its vicinity to the coast, it might have formerly been subject to attacks, either from the pirates of the sea, or the yet more desperate wreckers of the land. This house was, in fact, as square and as ugly as any old border keep-tower, and had at each corner a frightful little pepper-box turret. It was indeed altogether a curious appanage for a silly, profligate modern fop, such as Captain Seymour; nevertheless, it had more than once been very useful to him in the ways of his iniquity, for when he was harassed by duns, and threatened with arrest, he would post off to Cornwall and lie in his stronghold quite unsuspected, carousing with some dozen friends who were in the secret of his possession of it, and to whom he was, to do him justice, quite willing at times to lend the use of it when they also were annoyed by impatient tradesmen.

A flight of stone steps conducted to the principal entrance, the door of which had been left ajar, and when Holmes pushed it open, Emily found herself in a large hall, the majestic proportions of which were dimly exhibited by the feeble glimmer of a single candle which stood on a marble table.

"Here, Dorcas, Dorcas! you old ill-doing hag! where are you?" said Holmes, calling loudly; and at the summons a miserable looking old woman came hobbling from an inner apartment. "You idle, sleepy old fool! did I not tell you to stay here while I went to open the gate? but that forsooth was too much trouble for you, I suppose. I'll be hanged if I know why the Captain keeps you; a bouncing, cherry-cheeked lass out of the nearest village would be worth a hundred such hags!"

"You don't know why your master keeps me here, you don't know," repeated the woman, in a croaking accent. "Why should you know? Oh, oh, the deeds that brought us acquainted were over and done three years before he took you into his service. You be satisfied, Mr. Holmes, your master



and I understand each other. I am more useful to him than any wench with cherry cheeks, and cherry lips too, can be; so he is satisfied, and I. Oh, the time will come, when I shall have the reward I look for, waiting for which, has kept me so long in his service. But patience is always content. I have had to wait for it, but my time will come, my time will come."

"Come, get away, and don't stand mumbling and muttering there, you old jade," interposed Holmes. "I am not in the humour to put up with your gammon; and this person, Mr. Gregson, and this young lady, must be furnished with cold and hunger, for they have had a long ride, and no supper on the way; so get along, show us into the kitchen, and let us see what you have got. I dare say the young lady will not mind for once in a way supping in the kitchen, seeing that it is the warmest place in the house."

"The young lady! ah, the young lady!" said the old woman, with an abstracted air, and approaching the candle which she held in her hand nearer to Emily's face. An expression of mingled bitterness and sorrow then crossed her own withered countenance. "Ah!" she murmured, "a fair face indeed, a very fair face, but not fairer than my poor Phoebe's was—no, not a whit fairer."

"Well, old idiot, what are you standing gaping now for?" said Holmes. "If you do not get on and see about supper, I will report you to the Captain, and then he will send you away; you know he was near doing so last summer, for some of your airs and graces, and that after all you would not like to go."

"Like to go! Master Holmes," said the old woman. "Why, you are as good as a wizard. You know that I should not like to leave the Captain's service. No more I should; no more I should. Where would be my reward for remaining in it so long—the reward which I shall have some day, which I am sure of at last? But, come now, Mr. Holmes, and see but what a nice supper I have got—wild fowl, and ducks, and a quarter of lamb just roasted."

"And I have got two or three choice bottles of wine, and another of brandy," said Holmes, rubbing his hands in contemplation of the good cheer; "so, show us the way, Dorcas."

The prospect of a good supper after so long a journey also gave much satisfaction to Gregson; and even Emily, worn with fatigue and chilled by the night air, felt that to have any chance even in opposing her oppressors, she must endeavour to take some nourishment.

The old woman, therefore, led the way to the large old kitchen of the mansion, where an enormous fire blazed in the huge chimney, and the supper, of which she had spoken, was neatly spread on the long oaken table, with a clean damask cloth, and every other accessory to comfort, if not to positive luxury.

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## CHAPTER XX.

"Miss Jemmy. Well, well, I see it will do, but where's the person?"

"Constable. If you are called Count Basset, I have a billetdoux in my hand for you, that will set you right presently."

PROVOKED HUSBAND.

WHILE Emily, in the wilds of Cornwall, was encountering perils of a nature not often met with in the common-place round of worldly miseries, her aunt and cousins found that the bed of roses which they thought they had made out of their evil doings, was rendered uncomfortable by the points of a few thorns which they had never designed to introduce there.

The fact is, there is not a more nervous and pitiable person than the man or woman conscious of enormous guilt, by great wrong-doing towards their neighbours. Words and looks the most innocent, from the most indifferent parties, are tortured by the vivid fancy of guilt, into signs and tokens the most ominous and threatening. And then the night, the terrible sleepless hours of the weary night, when that still small

voice, which is stifled amid the discords, the tumults, the vanities of the day, becomes thunder-tongued, and will be heard! Alas, in this weary world, the night does not always bring repose even to the innocent! they too often tall the dull hours in the contemplation of those woes that have driven from them even the blessed refuge of sleep. But if sleep, the best solace of the weary, is thus denied too often to those whose sorrows are not the result of their faults, neither is it always vouchsafed to the hard and unyielding, the cruel in heart, and cunning in mind. The wicked can feel for themselves, and the success even of a mean and malignant plot does not always afford to its contriver the expected satisfaction. Thus it was that Julia Warrender was often kept waking, by her schemings to obtain a yet stronger hold over her Aunt Danby, and thereby of her wealth; while the restless nights of Mrs. Danby herself were occasioned by a torturing apprehension of the consequences which might be entailed upon her, by a guilt far grosser and more incautious than that of Julia, inasmuch that, if discovered, it would subject her to some of the severest punishments of the law.

Though less involved in malignant intrigue than either her mother or her cousin, Laura Danby was not happy; her vanity, after all, had been keenly mortified by Lord Alverston's preference of Emily, without a fortune, to herself, with a very large one; while the still more egregious conceit of Caroline Barton had been no less bitterly mortified by the total failure of Julia's plot, for substituting her attractions for those of Emily, as the Earl had never shown her more than common civility; and would, indeed, have been a little diverted, or a little angry, at the supposition that he would think of elevating to the position of his wife, a woman who, like Caroline Barton, had neither beauty, accomplishments, nor merit, to recommend her.

Julia, meanwhile, had confided to her sister the knowledge of Laura's correspondence with Mr. Augustus Maltravers, and moreover, Julia's suspicion that the said Mr. Maltravers was

neither more nor less than a common adventurer, probably of no very good character; and, as Miss Caroline, like her sister, though dull enough upon all matters that demanded the exercise of a little good sense or common information, could be very lively and intelligent in malice, she at once fell in with Julia's scheme, and agreed with her, that it would be an excellent jest to connive at the foolish Laura throwing herself away upon a sharper. It was therefore agreed between them, that Caroline should put herself forward as Laura's most friendly confidante, and therefore, while Julia affected to condemn her cousin's infatuation, Caroline encouraged it; as the two sisters had settled between them, that in case their intrigue, and her own folly, should urge Laura into a degrading marriage with a poor and unprincipled man, it would look best, not only in the eyes of Mrs. Danby but in those of the world, for Julia to affect disapproval of the proceeding, while the youth, and supposed inexperience of Caroline, might well excuse her share in promoting what she must be supposed to consider a "love match."

Meanwhile Laura, whose weakness of mind was by no means atoned for by kindness of heart, became the ready tool of her cunning relatives, and the handsome adventurer Maltravers, and was easily persuaded that, as she could not have the Earl of Alverston, a castle, and a coronet, the next best thing was Mr. Maltravers, a private marriage, and love in a cottage.

Meantime, upon various pretences, Laura had managed to cajole her mother out of a sum of money, not much inferior in amount to that of which she had been deprived by Julia; and as the latter lady professed that it was the most charming thing in the world for a marriage to be kept secret as hers was, and as Mr. Maltravers sued, as ardent lovers do, to be at once blessed with the hand of his lady-love, Laura finally consented, and, accompanied by her cousin Caroline, betook herself one fine morning to the church in which Julia and Mr. Warrender had been married.

*As Lent was over, the funereal trappings of the church*

were removed, but malicious fate played upon Laura a trick, that caused her as much pain as Julia had, on her wedding day, received from the ominous draperies of the sacred edifice. The ceremony was concluded, the register complete, and Laura, who was really much attached to her handsome and penniless lover, was blushing under the congratulations even of her cousin, when lo, as they were leaving the church, they came to a full encounter with another bridal party, which was just entering it.

Miss Danby, it should be observed, in spite of all that she had said on the occasion of Julia's marriage, respecting white satin, lace, and orange blossoms, had been, of course, in consequence of an equal privacy, compelled to relinquish those important accessories to nuptial happiness, at her own; and, though dressed with expense and elegance, she had not the conventional garments of a bride. What, then, was her mortification at meeting, face to face, with a bride, arrayed as one, in that very white satin, lace, and flowers, and surrounded by smiling and flattering friends.

It was sufficient to excite the irritation and confusion of Laura, that she should, thus inopportunately, have encountered a stranger, and in the haste with which she pulled down the veil which she wore over her bonnet, she did not observe that the bride was an acquaintance: the latter, however, who had recognized Laura, and surmised, of course, the cause of her presence in the church, would not be deprived of the opportunity of a triumph, which, as she had an abundance of the petty spite which is the characteristic of the meanest order of female minds, was very delightful to her.

"Ah," she exclaimed, quitting the arm of her lover, a very fat, red-faced, and vulgar-looking man, "my dear Laura, so you have been getting married, have you? Oh, you sly puss! But, however, I suppose I must not say anything, since I did not let you know that I was going to be married, though not quite so privately. But you must stay, dear, and see me married, and then come home and have breakfast, as I suppose it is not

WANTED A HUSBAND.

a wedding breakfast exactly that you have got at Holly Lodge but never mind, I'll keep your secret, dear."

"You can keep my cousin's secrets when she asks you to so, Miss Susan Teal," said Caroline Barton to the bride, who was no other than that young lady. "Talk of slyness, indeed I should like to hear of any slyness to equal yours, the friend that we have been, and that you should have it all settled, and even come here to be married, and have said not a word to me about it, when you cannot have forgotten that it was our agreement, that whoever got married first was to be the other's bridemaids."

"Ah, yes, Caroline dear, I know that was the agreement, to be sure," said Susan; "but you see somehow it does not turn out as well with your acquaintances when you know that they are going to be married. I have heard all about your cousin Emily's fine prospects being all up about the Earl of Alverston, and so you see, dear, I thought it just as well you should not know Mr. Robinson till I was safely married to him, you are so clever, and so good-looking you know, my dear."

"Too clever, and too good looking at any rate, Miss, to run after the son of an old cook-maid. Such a marriage may be very well for you, to be sure!"

"Really, Miss Barton, you forget that you are standing at the entrance of a place of worship, and that I am about to engage in a most solemn ceremony," said Susan Teal, suddenly seized with a pious concern at the indecorum of this conversation, carried on just within the walls of the church; and which she had commenced, with a view of mortifying both Laura and Caroline with the display of her bridal splendours—for Miss Teal and her party were really very expensively attired; and what was better still, she had a handsome private carriage at the door of the church, for Mr. Robinson could afford to keep a carriage, a luxury most ardently desired by the Bartons, but which they had never been able to coax from their father, who well knew that his income would not support it.

Alas! however, for all human triumphs, even that of Miss Teal on her wedding-day. She had better have let Laura and Caroline pass quietly out of the church, for it was unfortunately true that Mr. Robinson was the son of a cook-maid, and what was still worse, that the holy bonds of matrimony had not united his papa and mamma, the former of whom had, in a death-bed fit of remorse, left his property, about ten thousand pounds, to his son, whom he had abandoned to the care of his poor mother till he had reached the age of manhood, so that the young man, being wholly uneducated, could neither read, write, nor speak, with even tolerable correctness. To him and to his mother, however, ten thousand pounds appeared an inexhaustible mine of wealth; and Miss Teal was so much of their opinion, that she forgave the man all his vulgarity of manners and appearance, and as eagerly accepted his proposals of marriage as she carefully kept them concealed from Caroline Barton, whom she would not trust—for not attempting to rob her of her delectable lover—a bit the more, that she and Julia had made the young man the object of their unbounded ridicule, when once or twice they had met him at the house of Mrs. Teal, before he declared himself Susan's admirer. Certainly, Mr. Robinson and Miss Teal were by no means a dignified or handsome couple. The appearance of the young man was intensely vulgar; in person he was below the middle height, inclining to fat, with a coarse and common-place countenance, sandy hair, and a greasy complexion; and his bridal costume, his diamond studs and white satin waistcoat, no more imparted to him the air of a gentleman, than lace, flowers, and silks could give that of a lady to Miss Susan Teal, whose meagre figure, and wizened, tallowy, ill-natured face, contrasted as unfavourably with the buxom frame, fresh complexion and well formed features of Laura, as did the appearance of Mr. Robinson with that of the really handsome Maltravers.

The mention of the cook-maid was a most unkind cut on the part of Caroline Barton, and completely overcame the patience of Susan Teal, who forgot the indecorum of talking

at the entrance of the church, as she sharply added, "At any rate, Miss Barton, it is as well to marry the son of a cook-maid, as a man who has himself been a waiter at an hotel, which is what that gentleman, Miss Danby's bridegroom, was, I can tell you!"

As Miss Teal aimed this last arrow at the pride and peace of Laura, she flounced up the nave of the church, followed by her bridesmaids, satisfied that she had been even with Caroline for degrading Mr. Robinson in their estimation. Mr. Maltravers burst into so indignant a denial of the fact stated, that he drew a reproof from the clerk, who had been sent by the clergyman to inquire into the reason of the two bridal parties conversing at the entrance of the church. Caroline stood petrified, while old Teal, stepping back and addressing himself to Laura, said, "It is all very true, Miss Danby, or rather, Mrs. Simmonds, this young man was a waiter at an hotel; and perhaps in the course of the week you will have the goodness to pay me a hundred pounds that he owes me!"

Poor Laura! she had no resource but to faint away. To have married a waiter, and to be called Mrs. Simmonds, when she had expected to rejoice in the euphonious name of Maltravers, and to be an object of ridicule and insolence from the ugly and contemptible Susan Teal, was too much; it was a real faint, no pretence whatever, and saved her the additional mortification of hearing Mr. Robinson laugh and exclaim, "Here's a mistake! haint the grand Miss Danby put her feet in it, though!"

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## CHAPTER XXI

"But mends, thou art not thy lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain;  
The best laid schemes o' wits an' men,  
Gang aft a-gley,  
An' lee's us nought but grief and pain,  
For promis'd joy!"

SWAMP.

MISFORTUNES never come alone. Such persons as Julia Warrender and her Aunt Danby are doomed sometimes to prove, by their own experience, that very disagreeable truth. Julia had no great love for her cousin Laura; indeed, under general circumstances, she rather enjoyed whatever conduced to the disappointment or mortification of the latter. On the present occasion, however, much of the pain which had been felt by Laura was shared by Caroline; and Julia, with all her vices, was devotedly attached to her younger sister. It had been previously arranged, that Laura should part with her new made husband, as Julia had done, at the church door; and then, spending the day at St. John's Wood, with Julia and Caroline, return in the evening to Wimbledon, and, after the lapse of a week or two, break the news of her marriage to her mother.

After the very inopportune meeting with Miss Susan Teal, Caroline, who had no disposition to prolong the malignant triumph of that young lady, whom she hated more heartily than any other of her acquaintance—Emily Forester not excepted, sent for a hackney coach, in which she removed the really swooning Laura to the nearest hotel, in company with her husband, the self-styled Mr. Maltravers.

The fury with which, when recovered from her fainting fit, Laura reproached the young man for the artifice which he had practised, had in it little of the tenderness of a bride; but Mr. Simmonds, though an impostor and fortune hunter, was neither ill tempered nor cruel, and he bore the storm of Laura's reproaches with a patience that ultimately cooled her anger. He admitted, even to its fullest extent, the vileness of his own duplicity; but then, his love for her was his ex-

cuse—an excuse which, when made by a handsome man, to a woman whose heart pleads in his favour, seldom fails to bring him off in triumph, even though the woman be naturally of a far sterner and more selfish temper than was poor Laura Danby. Besides, she now learned his whole story from Mr. Augustus Simmonds, who was very wisely of opinion that half confidences are embarrassing things; and that, since he had been compelled to descend from the pinnacle of romantic and genteel poverty, on which he had placed himself, it would be as well even to own the truth, lest his bride and her cousin should suppose him, after all, of worse origin than he really was.

The father of Mr. Augustus Simmonds had been in trade as a silk-mercant and laceman, and chiefly, as his son asserted, had been brought to ruin by the manoeuvres of Mr. Josiah Teal, who, when the poor man was dying in the extremity or distress, made a great merit of advancing to his son a hundred pounds, out of some thousands of which he had robbed the father—binding the son, at the same time, to return the money. The result of this was, that after the death of the elder Simmonds, his son and daughter were compelled to assume menial situations, as a means of obtaining bread; and as the daughter, Jane, had a considerable portion of cunning, she had not been long installed as a waiting-maid, in the service of Laura Danby, before she contrived a plot, in which her handsome brother was to play the part of the distressed hero of a novel, and re-establish both her fortune and his own, by a marriage with Miss Danby. This plan was facilitated by the young man losing his employment in the hotel to which Mr. Teal so maliciously alluded, and, by his sister's directions, he first made acquaintance with Laura, as, accompanied only by her maid, she was walking in the park. Mr. Simmonds, as observed, possessed a very handsome person, and fortunately for their design, there was not the slightest resemblance between him and Jane, who played the part of confidante to perfection; carrying to Laura those rose-tinted and perfumed

billets, one of which Julia Barton nearly caught her cousin reading, on the morning after Emily had been brought to the house of her aunt, by the Earl of Alverston. These notes, Jane, who was far sharper witted than her brother, often aided to indite, and she was greatly diverted by the avidity with which Laura perused them. When she found the Earl of Alverston was talked of as a lover for Miss Danby, she, indeed, trembled lest the vanity of the young lady should triumph over the attachment with which young Simmonds had inspired her; and still more did Jane fear for the success of her brother, when she found that the intrigue was discovered by Julia Barton, of whom she stood in that kind of awe which one cunning person feels towards another, who they apprehend will be an overmatch in artifice. Upon this last point, however, Jane's mind was soon set at rest, for she found that Julia had no suspicion of the real name and position of the pretended Mr. Maltravers; and that, beyond this, Julia had no objection whatever to abet her cousin in contracting a marriage with a poor and unknown adventurer.

It should be observed, too, that the very liberal stipend which Laura allowed to her favourite waiting-maid, and her continual and often handsome presents, enabled the latter to assist her brother in appearing with all due dignity as Mr. Augustus Maltravers, a gentleman of most excellent family, and fine expectations on the death of an uncle, who was very rich and a terrible miser, and who existed only in the fertile fancy of his sister Jane. That this fraud, of which, absurd and common-place as it was, the silly Laura Danby became the victim, was not discovered, save by her accidental encounter with the Teals on the morning of her marriage, was no matter for marvel, as Miss Susan was by no means admitted as a frequent or familiar visitor at the house of the great Mrs. Danby; and, on the few occasions that she had been a guest there, Jane, who had heard her name mentioned between Laura and the Bartons, managed to avoid being seen by her, not only in fear lest some accident or

chance-word from Susan might then mar the plan she had laid with reference to her brother, but also, because she had so much of what might be called just pride and resentment, that she was resolved not to give her father's enemy the satisfaction of finding that she, too, as well as her brother, had been compelled to adopt a servile situation.

All these explanations, then, were very candidly made to Laura by Mr. Simmonds, at the hotel to which they repaired after their unlucky wedding; and the young man exhibited, in his confession so much of affection for Laura, and real remorse for the part he had acted, and the confusion and disgrace which he had caused her, that a sterner disposition than that of Laura might have been won to forgive him; while she, who was very blindly in love, began to consider with herself, that, after all, it was no great matter; she did not want to marry a man of fortune, since that of Sir Matthew Forester was enough to satisfy any reasonable desires; while, with regard to family, it would not be just to make much complaint, as the ancestors of her own father did not take a place among the patricians of the land.

In fact, love itself, for once in a way, gave very good and philosophical counsel, and advised Laura to make the best of a bad bargain, and content herself with the husband she could not get rid of. While Caroline Barton, who was at heart greatly annoyed that Susan Teal should have got married before her, took the good-natured side of the question with her cousin, out of ill nature to Susan, and comforted her with the reflection, that she had money enough to buy the low fellow whom Susan had married, a hundred times over; and that, while Mr. Robinson was a mean looking, ugly fellow, who murdered the Queen's English at every word, Mr. Simmonds was very handsome, and could also express himself with, at any rate, tolerable grammatical correctness.

*Consoling themselves, and the poor bridegroom, too, with these reflections, Laura and Caroline at length dried the*  
G

tears which anger and mortification had caused them to shed. And, while Mr. Simmonds, departed with the money which Laura gave him, and a commission to take a furnished house in the neighbourhood of the park, as Laura resolved to brave opinion, and at once declare her meaning, the two ladies repaired to the house of Mrs. Barton, at St. John's Wood.

In their eagerness and anxiety to impart to Julia the important events of the morning, however, neither Laura nor Caroline observed at first, that the countenance of the latter bore the impress of severe grief and anxiety, and rose from the couch, on which she was sitting, to receive them. Still less had they noticed a certain air of dejection and confusion in the house; that the drawing-room was unswept, the ashes from the previous day's fire lying under the grate, and the half-burnt tapers still standing on the table; and that the servant, who opened the door to them, looked sleepy and ill tempered, and had not answered with her accustomed civility the inquiry as to whether Miss Barton was at home—for Julia, be it observed, had been staying at her father's house for the last few days, in order that, when Laura's marriage was declared to Mrs. Danby, she might affect ignorance of the whole affair, and affirm, with more semblance of truth, that it had been wholly arranged between Laura and Caroline.

"How late you are! I expected you long before!" she said, in a snappish tone, as her sister and cousin entered. Then she sat with a gloomy air, listening to their detail of the events of the morning.

"So, indeed!" she exclaimed, turning upon poor Laura with a vindictive air, and without one word of pity or consolation, "a pretty business you have made, Laura; and my poor dear Caroline to be drawn in, too, to look like a fool, and have a triumph, such as it must have been, taken off by that odious little minx, that Susan Teal. You talked and sneered about my marriage, Miss Laura. A pretty business

your own is—something worse than mine, I think, for Mr. Warrender is a gentleman.”

These words were uttered by Julia with a corresponding bitterness of look and tone, and she had indeed been accustomed, on all occasions, so much to govern her own family, by the excess of her violence, that she rather indulged in its display than endeavoured to control it. Upon this morning, however, the usually passive and cowardly temper, even of Laura Danby, had been roused, and she was ill disposed to endure the reproaches and insolence of Julia, after the triumph of Susan Teal.

It was, therefore, with a sneer and a loud angry tone, such as her cousins had never before heard her use, that she replied, “A gentleman, indeed! Oh, yes, Frank Warrender is a model of a gentleman; who took from you, so you have yourself owned, every shilling of the five hundred pounds. I was silly enough to let you rob me of, and spent it all upon his own debts, and now will not own you as his wife, because, forsooth, as he says, his father does not like the connection. Your family, I think, though, is as good as his, and, at any rate, I shall not have that kind of insult from my husband; and he is better looking, and better tempered, too, than Frank Warrender. And I don’t see that the son of a silk-mercer, after all, is much worse than the son of a common lawyer. And, beyond all that, you will recollect, Julia, that however unhappily my marriage may turn out, I have to thank you for it; you advised me to it.”

“I advise you! I never advised anything of the sort!” answered Julia, with that consummate assurance, which only the most habitual and audacious violators of the truth can ever attain.

“Good heavens, Julia!” ejaculated Mrs. Simmonds. “will you say that you did not advise me to marry Augustus?”

“I shall say so!” returned Julia, coolly.

“But, you know that is false!” reiterated Laura.

“I shall say so!” repeated Mrs. Warrender.

"Then you are a false, good-for-nothing, pitiless wretch!" exclaimed Laura, bursting into tears of mingled rage and grief. "You are the source of nothing but mischief, wherever you go; and I verily believe that you rejoice in the unfortunate connection which you have been so much the means of inducing me to form."

"You are quite mistaken, there, madam!" answered Julia. "I do not rejoice in it; because, in the first place, my poor dear Caroline was drawn in to share your disgrace; and, in the second place, because the whole affair has given a triumph to that hateful Susan Teal. Oh, I wish I had known that she was wheedling that vulgar fool to marry her, I would have spoiled her schemes for her! The idea of a thing such as she is, having a husband!"

"Yes, and a nice carriage, too, Julia!" said Caroline, shedding tears of spite as she spoke. "I saw them get out of it. The idea of Susan Teal having a carriage!"

"Never mind, Carry, darling," said Julia, hitting by chance upon a truth, and speaking it because it served the purpose of her malice; "never mind, she will not keep it. 'Set a beggar on horseback,' you know they say, and the adage is correct. Mr. Robinson's eight or ten thousand pounds will not allow for him to set up his paltry little wife in a carriage. However, it is provoking, very, to see such an odious creature having it all her own way, even for a little time; and we encountering nothing but trouble and disappointment."

With these words, Julia, whose ill temper failed at last to support her courage, burst into such a passion of tears, that her cousin and sister, equally alarmed and surprised, and assuming that the news which they had brought was the sole source of her distress, fell to entreaties that she would be calm, as Mr. Simmonds was a handsome fellow, and a good-natured creature, after all; and, perhaps, Laura would be happier with him, than with some fine gentleman, who would only spend her money, and give her no thanks for it when it was gone.

"It is not that, it is not that!" exclaimed Julia, pushing away her comforters with an almost savage air; "it is not Laura and her fool's marriage that troubles me, she must take the results of her folly; no, it is something of more consequence than marrying; it is vile, merciless tradesmen and landlords, and a gaol for my poor father, and the chuckling of all our hateful acquaintances over our ruin; that is what makes me weep, that is what drives me mad!"

"Good heavens, Julia, what do you mean?" inquired Caroline, pale with affright.

"Yes, yes, Julia, for pity's sake, tell us what you mean?" repeated Laura, who, in her easy, good nature, forgave the malignant innuendos against herself contained in Julia's last speech, in a real compassion for the anguish—the despair—which was manifested in her looks and tones.

"This is what I mean, then!" cried Julia, with a furious accent, "that there is an execution in the house, a vile, horrid wretch down stairs, a 'man in possession' I think they call him; that he, forsooth, is to look after us, that we do not touch or move our own furniture, our own trinkets, and clothes; and, more than all this, that our poor father, our poor, dear, kind father, is in prison—has been arrested. Do you understand that, Miss Caroline, your father was taken to prison last night, while you were getting ready to go with your cousin to her fine, respectable wedding!"

"You are very cruel, Julia, very cruel!" said Caroline, bursting into tears. "Why do you reproach me in this manner? I knew nothing of this—I am not accountable for it, neither I nor Laura. I am sure I did not know that papa was so much in want of money; I thought that putting people in prison was pretty well done with in these days!"

"Oh, yes," returned Julia, bitterly, "so it is done with, quite done with, the law of arrest; that is to say, if you pay the money to your brutal creditor just when the law orders that it shall be paid, but if you cannot find the money to meet the debt then, you are put in prison for 'contempt'."



went; that was the jargon with the excuse of which they dragged my poor father from his comfortable bed that night!"

"Oh, Julia! Julia!" said Mrs. Starnforth, with an outburst of reproach, "how could you suffer such an anxiety? You should have come to Wimbledon; mamma would then have given you the money—I would have given it!"

"Was I to come from St. John's Wood to Wimbledon, at eleven o'clock at night?" said Julia, with a sudden bitterness of tone.

"Yes, at twelve o'clock, or even in the morning!" retorted Laura. "Oh, the thought of my poor, poor uncle in a prison, it is too terrible! Oh, Julia, let us go to him at once!"

The fervid tone with which Laura spoke, the tears that stood in her eyes, momentarily touched even the stout and selfish heart of her cousin; for it was of Julia's father that Laura spoke; and, with all her vices, Julia loved her father. The tears swam in her own eyes. "You are a good-hearted girl, Laura, after all!" she said, rising from the sofa, and kissing her cousin. Then she added, "But this is a sad business, Laura, worse than you think it; poor papa has been living beyond his income, there's no denying it, and there is nothing left but to declare himself a bankrupt; he owes nearly ten thousand pounds, and his property does not amount to more than two!"

"Well, Julia, well! ten thousand pounds is a large sum, to be sure; but mamma is very rich, she could spare more than that, and not feel the loss."

"She would scarcely be willing to spare so much, Laura!" answered Julia, dryly; "indeed, I believe she would not willingly give ten thousand pounds to save half the human race from perdition. Yet I do not tell you that she would not have given such a sum to me; but, you will understand, it would be because she could not help herself, because she would fear to refuse. But it does not suit my purpose to ask from her this favour; I think, since the matter has gone

so far, we may as well endure it to the end, and let my father declare himself a bankrupt; the ten thousand pounds necessary to pay his creditors, would, to my mind, be better in our pockets than in theirs; we shall want something to live on, and your mother, Laura, will not have another ten thousand pounds to give."

"What do you mean?" inquired Laura, disdainfully. "It is known that the fortune of Sir Matthew Forester amounted to more than a million sterling!"

"Exactly!" answered Julia, "and out of that sum, your mother, for very good reasons known to me and to herself, would not, I know, did I please to apply to her, refuse me ten thousand pounds; but, as I before observed, there is so great a chance whether the money remains much longer at her disposal, that I do not choose to ask it from her, merely to throw it away among my father's creditors."

"What do you mean, Julia?" said Laura, really alarmed by the malignant, yet significant looks and tones of her cousin. "How should it not be as much in my mother's power to give a sum of money to-morrow, or the next week, or month, or year, as to-day?"

"Simply, my dear, because she may not have it to give," answered Julia, bitterly. "I can tell you, Laura, that the fortune which your mother obtained by her iniquity, she is likely to lose by her folly. It is not so secure, I can tell you that, and you had better 'make hay while the sun shines,' and wring from your mother as large an amount as possible in ready money and jewels, while you can. And this is very disinterested advice on my part, as your mother and I stand in that position, that whatever she gives to others is my loss, since, if I chose, I could this day demand from her the surrender of all her available property, on the penalty of at once charging her fine mansion for an apartment in Newgate, where I apprehend the law would send her for her robberies and forgeries, and other little pastimes of which it will not altogether approve."

It would not be easy to describe the amazed, aghast look with which Laura regarded her cousin, as she uttered these terrible words; the gasping, trembling voice in which she demanded their meaning.

"Nay, my dear," answered Julia, "I think the meaning of what I say is plain enough; but, if you want still plainer terms, I must tell you that the will of Sir Matthew, proved by your mother, was a forgery; and that it would be well for her, if the forgery of that will were the worst deed she had done. However, she may escape detection yet; and, at any rate, in the interim, Laura, you had better look sharply after your own interests, I mean to look to mine; and the ten thousand pounds your mother must find for me in three days. Nothing hurtful to her can transpire with the public, I think, in less than another week; therefore, in case of the worst, she had better get together as much money as possible, and be ready to leave England; and, Laura, you had better see after your share, your mother has kept you too much in the dark; it was not just!"

"Oh, my poor mother!" exclaimed Laura; "I may well forgive her the injustice which she practised, chiefly to secure wealth and position for me; still more easily can I pardon her for concealing from me the fearful risks we encountered to hold possession of that wealth. Oh, as Heaven is my judge, all that you say, Julia, is new to me; I knew not of a forged will, or of any injury done to Sir Matthew!"

"I believe you!" answered Julia, with a savage accent; "your mother was not quite such a fool as to trust such a fool as you are!"

"It were better, then," retorted Laura, "if she had trusted the fool, than to have made a confidante of such a knave as you are; my folly would have shrunk from the perils that your knavery has urged my mother to encounter, and I would not, of my own accord, have run such risks to receive the diadem of an empress!"

"I dare say not!" returned Julia; "you have not spirit

enough ; and I do not think, after all, that your marriage has been such an ill-judged one. If the good Mr. Simmonds can get into business again, it will be a vocation just suited to your talents, to stand behind a counter measuring ribbons and lace ; it will be a style much better suited to you, my dear, than that of a countess. Depend upon it, Emily Forester is the real fine lady born, and you only fit to be the milliner to attend on her !”

“ I am no more disposed to be, or fit to be the attendant of Emily Forester, than yourself, Julia,” replied Laura ; “ I dislike her, I always did so ; but I do say, with all that, if we had never interfered with her, she would not have interfered with us, and I was no party to the tricks and falsehoods you practised towards her, to persuade the Earl of Alverston that she encouraged Captain Seymour. I did not care about the man myself—if he had been ten times an Earl I should not have been in love with him—he is not the sort of man to suit my fancy ; but you must meddle and make, forsooth, and have one of your fine plots in hand, without which I believe you could not live, though you might, for all the good you get out of them, either for yourself or anybody else. It would have been rather a safer game for poor mamma, I guess, as I said just now, to trust to my folly, than to your knavery ; I should not have gone about to persuade her to forge wills, or any other such horrid actions !”

“ Stop, stop ; not quite so fast,” said Julia ; “ your filial affection, my dear cousin, partially misleads you ; you will understand I had no share in those little peccadilloes of forgery, et-cetera, on the part of your amiable parent, which are likely to place her in an unpleasant position—I had no foreknowledge of them ; it would have been better, perhaps, both for her and you, if I had, as I should have managed things more wisely, and not have left my character and fortunes at the mercy of such creatures as Mrs. Harrison, the housekeeper, and the low brute whom she chose to marry. No, Laura, you will understand that I knew nothing of that which your mother did—

until it was done; indeed, though I had my suspicions, I had no proof until within the last three months."

While Julia spoke thus, her cousin had sunk upon a chair, and listened to her with the fixed eye and parched lip of astonishment and terror. Caroline, too, gazed and listened in a kind of bewildered silence, for she had been by no means aware of the extent of her aunt's turpitude, though conscious that it was through the knowledge of some deviation from rectitude, on her part, that Julia held her so much in her power. Caroline, too, no less than Julia, loved her father; and it was of his pitiable situation that she chiefly thought as, interposing in the bitter discourse between her sister and cousin, she exclaimed, "But what has all this, Julia, to do with the situation of poor papa; what does it matter to us about Aunt Danby?"

"Nothing, my dear sister," answered Julia, "beyond the circumstance, that if I do not think it worth while to demand from her the money, to satisfy the wretches who have taken him to prison, it is because I think it better that such a sum should be in our pockets than in theirs; that our father, in fact, had better get rid of his debts in the bankruptcy court, and have the ten thousand pounds from Aunt Danby to begin the world again."

"You speak of my poor mother, Julia," said Mrs. Simonds, "as if she were your bond-slave—your machine for making money; have you no pity, no compassion, no feeling!"

"Oh, yes, my dear," returned Julia, "I have abundance of feeling, abundance of compassion, as all sensible people have it, for my own family and myself; and, with regard to turning your dear mamma into a bond-slave, and a machine for making money, you will understand this, that every one in this world, who, by their folly or their faults, is committed to the power of another person, must act according to that person's will, even to the point of giving up their money!"

There was a kind of Satanic pride in the tone and look

with which Julia thus boasted of her selfishness, and the tyranny which she would exercise over her aunt, that quite appalled poor Laura, who, weeping and wringing her hands, exclaimed, "Oh, Julia, you are very merciless, very cruel; and my poor mamma, what is it she has done? You say that Sir Matthew was ill-used, and his will was forged; but you must prove these things—I will not believe them on your assertion."

"The law would, my dear, which is of much more consequence," said Julia; "but if you will not believe them on my word; perhaps you will credit that of your dear mamma herself, who could, if she chose, *prove* them, as you call it, to your entire satisfaction. As to calling me merciless and cruel, I am neither one nor the other; and you will be pleased to employ more civil terms in speaking to me, if you do not wish to make me really that which you now call me so unjustly; and I tell you, as a warning, that I am not in a humour to be provoked. I am harassed, distracted, with the misfortunes of my father; I am uneasy, too, at not hearing from Warrender, who was by no means well when we parted yesterday; I am sure it only requires for him to be taken ill, to crown all the vexations I am exposed to at this moment. I do not need to be tormented about your ridiculous marriage, or the folly and guilt of your mother; I have troubles enough of my own!"

As she spoke thus, Julia threw herself sullenly on the sofa; but at that moment there came a knock at the door, so loud and hasty, that involuntarily she started up again, with a foreboding that it was the herald of some evil news. Such presentiments are not always deceitful; the servant who had opened the door to Laura and Caroline presently entered the room, and said that a man had come from the elder Mr. Warrender, to fetch Miss Julia, as Mr. Frank was very ill, had broken a blood-vessel—was dying!

Julia fell into hysterics; she could feel for herself!

## CHAPTER XXII.

"The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law."

SHAKSPERE.

OVER the good cheer which the old woman Dorcas had provided, and the good wine which Mr. Holmes himself brought forward to crown the banquet, he and his companion grew so boisterous in their hilarity, and so offensively familiar in their demeanour towards Emily, that she was fain, after slightly partaking of the repast, to request that Dorcas would show her to the chamber prepared for her. With this request, however, the old woman seemed at first unwilling to comply, but on Emily repeating it, she snatched a candle from the table with an impatient air, and bidding the young lady follow her, hobbled out of the kitchen. A long passage diverging from the entrance-hall led Emily and her conductress to the foot of a staircase, which Emily found, on ascending, to be so high, so steep, and so narrow, that she was at once convinced that it was built in one of the little ugly turrets of the mansion.

The old woman Dorcas was somewhat feeble, and the task of mounting these stairs so little suited her years and infirmities, that she was twice compelled to rest on a little square landing-place which broke the ascent, and on each of which was a door giving entrance to the chambers, of which the turret contained three. The apprehensions of Emily were not lessened by finding that she was to be conducted to the very summit of this tower, which, from the bolts drawn across the doors of the lower apartments, was evidently to be unoccupied save by herself. As little encouraging, too, was the malignant kind of chuckle in which Dorcas indulged each time that she paused in ascending the stairs, holding up the candle to Emily's face with the same kind of scrutinising look in her own that she had exhibited on the young girl's first arrival.

The appearance of this old woman Dorcas was, as before

observed, but little prepossessing; and yet her features were of a cast that might have once been handsome; but the skin was wrinkled and sallow; the loss of the teeth had brought the aquiline nose into a very unbecoming proximity to the chin, the eyes deep sunk in the head were bleared and hollow, and the thin and faded lips were either drawn tight as if from the force of bodily or mental anguish, or relaxed in a smile, that, from its malignity, was equally unpleasant to behold. The dress of this old woman was as peculiar as her aspect: she had evidently some notions of finery in her way, for she was attired in one of the loose and very unbecoming gowns formerly called a *sacque*, the material being a thick, stiff, brown silk-brocade, with large bunches of dark red roses; it was trimmed with rich black lace, and Dorcas had raked it out of the wardrobe stores of some great-grandmother of Captain Seymour; that gentleman suffering her to make herself pretty well free of the repositories at the Turreted House, as his Cornwall abode was called.

Rich, however, as was her dress, it by no means improved the appearance of Dorcas, who, in her stiff brocade, and with her withered and malicious face, might have sat for the portrait of the beldame ghost in Sir Walter Scott's fearful story of the "Tapestried Chamber."

Poor Emily Forester's heart sank, and under the influence of the old woman's malicious scrutiny she had not the courage to pursue her intent of imploring assistance to escape from Captain Seymour. Thus, as Dorcas, after each pause upon the staircase, turned round and pursued her way with a malignant chuckle, Emily followed her in silence. At length they reached the topmost stair, and Dorcas throwing open a door, exclaimed, in that harsh croaking voice that was peculiar to her, "There, my pretty young lady, is your room; a very nice room, with a famous look-out from the windows; only you must not try and fly away from them—your wings won't bear you, and you may get an ugly fall, as a bird, as pretty as you, did once before, to her cost."



While the old woman spoke thus, Emily Forester, with a sick heart, was looking round the chamber, from which indeed she felt that escape would be impossible. The room, indeed, was not in itself a dull or unpleasant one, though the walls were wainscoted, and the large old-fashioned fireplace lined with Dutch tiles, quaintly illustrative of Bible-histories. The fire, which the altitude of the chamber made pleasant even on that warm night, as it blazed and flickered in the ample grate, showed the cheerful modern furniture of the apartment—the French bedstead, with its drapery of gay, light-coloured chintz, similar to that which curtained the windows; the elegantly furnished toilet table, the pretty japanned chairs, the handsome modern cheval glass, and mahogany wardrobe.

Almost involuntarily Emily stepped towards one of the windows, and drew back the curtain; but any hope which she might have entertained, even of making her situation known beyond the walls of the house, was then at once extinguished, for that lofty chamber overlooked only the gardens of the mansion, which at no great distance were there bounded by a rock that overhung the sea, the faint murmur of which now reached Emily's ears, mixed with the sighing of the night-wind round the lonely turret. Yet the prospect from that window was beautiful for any eye, save that of a prisoner; the tall trees waving in the garden, the rocks beyond broken into fantastic forms and casting strange shadows in the flood of the moonbeams, beneath which the ocean heaved in the foreground like liquid silver, while in the distance the glimmering of the stars distinguished the point where the darkened waters seemed united to the sky.

"Ah," said Dorcas, seating herself beside the fire as Emily turned away from the window, which was as it seemed very superfluously defended by iron bars, between which no human figure, however slender, could have passed—"Ah, my pretty dear, did I not tell you the truth now; no escaping from this *little sky chamber* you see, for the door, I can tell you for *your comfort*, will be as well secured as the window. But

why should you escape, why should you come to a better ending than those who were shut up in this chamber before you? Oh, but I noticed you were affronted at the bold talk of Mr. Holmes and the man who brought you here, but you need not make much account of that, my dainty darling; you will have worse to bear than a few free words before you get out of this house, I can promise you, as your betters have done before you. Who are you, to get off better than other people?"

"My good woman," said Emily, mildly, "my destruction and misery cannot repair the wrong which has been sustained by others—it can do you no good; wherefore then, should you aid in persecuting an unfortunate who has never done you an injury, and who, if you will benevolently assist her in this great peril, would gladly repay the obligation, by obtaining for you the means of living more cheerfully than you can do in this lonely place?"

"Assist me to live cheerfully!" said Dorcas, with a sardonic laugh. "Oh, yes; I look like such a very cheerful, merry, comfortable person, do I not? And you say that mischief to you can do me no good. Won't it, though? Look there, wench, look there," and the old woman pointed to a portrait on the wall; "that's as fair a face as yours, I reckon; yet six long years ago this man—this Seymour, prevailed upon the owner of that face to play false to an honest lover, to leave an old mother, whose only joy was in her smile, and abandon a pretty house, to be tricked out for a while in London with jewels, and silks, and a carriage to ride in, and servants to wait on her, and then, when his fancy was worn out, he brings her down here, and leaves her to wear her life out, in weeping over his falsehood, and her loss of a good name, and a good mother, and a good husband. She was not one born for such shame and misery, and she could not bear to live in it; and what was worse for her, poor soul, she loved the villain who had seduced her—loved him, though she knew he was not worthy to tie the three strings of the true hearted man's

whom she had deceived for his sake; yet she did not forgive herself for her falsehood to her first lover, and for bringing down so much shame and sorrow upon the gray hairs of her poor mother, who had lived as the wife and widow of a decent tradesman for forty years, and never knew, till her daughter called it there, what it was to have the blush of shame upon her cheek. But, poor thing, that daughter was sorely punished; she took it as a judgment, that he for whose sake she had been false to her mother and her first love, should play her false in his turn, so she went melancholy mad, and pined from day to day, till at last, in a sudden fit of frenzy, she threw herself from that window, and was crushed to death on the stones below. That's why the window has been grated. Bad as he is, Captain Seymour will not leave another woman the chance to dash herself to pieces on his account. Oh, no! he does not like having his pretty birds—his little prisoners—always mew'd up in this room, with its frightful remembrances; but I say, this room, Captain, this room only, or find some one else to play the part of jailor for you."

Emily had stood aghast at this horrible story; she had hitherto regarded Captain Seymour merely as a profligate and selfish man of fashion, against whose wiles a common share merely of virtue and decorum, was alone necessary as a protection. The relation of Dorcas, however, showed him tainted with a deeper guilt, stained even with the blood of the unfortunate whom he had betrayed; or rather, it showed what horrible results attended a course of heartless libertinism. It is not because results so violent and immediate do not often occur, that the Captain Seymours are less guilty; the victim may be murdered, and yet no hand of violence, either her own or that of another, be laid upon her life.

"Ah, look, look well at that picture, young lady," said Dorcas, as she perceived the eyes of Emily fixed upon the portrait, which hung over the mantel-piece; "look well at that portrait, and boast, if you can, of a fairer face."

"Indeed," answered Emily, with that mildness of tone and

manners which she judged most likely to soothe the feelings of Dorcas, whose acerbity she judged to be the result of some most cruel misfortune, "indeed you mistake me; I have no desire to boast of any little personal attraction with which I may have been favoured, still less am I guilty of a vanity so gross as to conceive, for a moment, that my poor face would bear comparison with that portrayed in this picture, which is one of the loveliest I ever beheld."

"You think so, young lady, you think so, do you?" said Dorcas, in a more placable tone than she had hitherto used. "Oh, but it is a lovely face, is it not?"

As she spoke the old woman threw the light which she held full upon the portrait, which was indeed that of a most transcendantly lovely woman. No Grecian statue ever surpassed in delicacy and precision of outline that exquisite profile; the eyes had the hue of the violet and the shape of the almond, and the hair in loose wavy ringlets strayed over the fair throat like so much molten gold. The fidelity with which the charms of the original had been transferred to the canvas of the painter, rendered the portrait a rare work of art. Emily expressed her opinion of the artist's skill.

"Yes, yes," responded Dorcas, with a sigh, "he was a clever man, I heard, the painter who took my Phœbe's picture; it cost the Captain a mint of money; but ever since her death he cannot bear to look upon it, and I bring it here to torment him, the destroyer of my poor child."

"Your child, your's!" ejaculated Emily. "Is it possible that the young woman, whose shocking story you have told me, was your daughter, and that you will bear to live in the same house with, and to eat the bread of, her destroyer? Oh, do not speak of the guilt of Captain Seymour again. You a mother, and you will bear the sight of the man who killed your child—you will continue even to place fresh victims in his snares. Woman, his sins become white as snow by the side of your scarlet iniquity."

"Softly, softly, sweet and gentle young lady," said Dorcas,

with a hissing accent, "you do not know me yet. I tell you that, when my poor girl was killed, the Captain sent to me in a consternation of horror and remorse; in his heartlessness he never contemplated a catastrophe so dreadful. The jury who were summoned at the inquest gave a verdict of temporary insanity; yes, yes, she was insane, my poor girl! and enough of sorrow she had to make her so. Well then, the Captain sent to me, as I told you, and he expressed a repentance for his conduct, which at the time I believed was real; and as he knew that, amid my grief for the loss of my daughter, I had neglected my little business at Truro, and was like to be reduced to poverty in my old age, he offered me an asylum in this house, this house which had been the scene of my darling's horrible death. It was something, however, to live in the rooms that she had lived in, and much more, to have the consolation of seeing others wooed and deserted—loved and betrayed, as she had been. Oh, the shallow, thoughtless fool that this Seymour is, he soon forgot my poor Phœbe, and then, as he commenced his old career of riot and folly, perhaps he thought that I had forgotten her too. The brainless prodigal, as if a mother could forget."

"Alas!" exclaimed Emily, "why do you remain in the house of this man, at whose hands you have suffered so much? Surely it must be bitter bread that you earn by serving him; and the satisfaction you speak of, in beholding other poor creatures deceived and betrayed, as your daughter was, is not that too purchased at a price beyond its worth?"

"I do not know," said the old woman, "I do not know: sometimes I have been induced to pity the victims of the Captain and his friends, whom they have brought here, but after a time I learned to believe, that if men are false and deceitful, women are often avaricious and base, and that if the betrayer can afford to gild their shame, they scarcely feel it as such; why, then, should I care more for a woman's repute than she does herself; there are not many who feel and think as my poor Phœbe did."

"Not many, indeed," responded Emily, with a sigh. "Were there more women resembling your daughter, there would be never men such as Captain Seymour; but if there were but one, only one other such, unable to live with the loss of another—or say, one who, bound by the most solemn engagements to the most worthy and honourable of men, regards Seymour and his designs with loathing and abhorrence—oh, could you yield that one, alone and defenceless, to his treachery? Would you not rather save her for your dead daughter's sake?—save her, when in so doing you would also rescue yourself from this dreary and monotonous life, in which the only variation for your mournful remembrances of your daughter's fate, is in abetting fresh villainies on the part of her destroyer? Ah! poor unhappy mother, you will relent—you will not always pursue so mistaken an idea of revenge—you will not always offer to the memory of your daughter the sacrifice of virtue, and hope, and life itself, in others."

In the excess of her agitation, the wildness of her hope that Dorcas might be won upon to release her from the toils of Captain Seymour, Emily had risen from her seat, and approached the old woman with clasped hands and streaming eyes.

Still retaining her seat by the fire, Dorcas fixed her sunken eyes upon the young girl with a strange expression of mingled scorn and pity. "Why, thou silly chit," she said, "dost thou take me for the ogress of a fairy tale. Have I told thee that I could avenge myself, for my poor Phoebe's fate, only on the vain rascals, who, with a tithe of the excuse she had for her folly, become not only weak but vicious? Look you, young lady, it is Seymour himself, the brainless, heartless profligate, that I could reach at last. But do you think that the purposes of my revenge are to be furnished to me by the idle and giddy coxcombs whom Seymour and his friends dupe in the country, or the still more worthless and vain fools, the milliners' apprentices and opera dancers, whom they have sometimes brought here from London? No; as I told you before, ~~there~~

stupid and wicked creatures are, for the most part, content with the infamy of their lot; it is not through them that I can bring Seymour to the bar of public justice, or to an end as deplorable as that of my child; and nothing less than a public trial, or his death by his own hand, can or shall content my vengeance against him. As for you, young lady, I think I may say you need not fear."

"You will save me then, you will aid me to escape from this villain?" said Emily, eagerly.

"You need not fear," answered Dorcas, "I think that I may trust you, that the tale which Holmes told me, that you were engaged to a man of rank and wealth, and that Seymour would for a bribe compel you to marry him, is true; and can you on your part think I shall rejoice in the profligate spendthrift, who destroyed my child, redeeming his broken fortunes with the dowry of a wife? Oh, oh, is it likely, is it likely? Sleep quietly, young woman; Seymour will not be here till to-morrow; he is to bring a parson with him, I am told; such a parson—a reckless, gambling villain like himself; but do you hold firm and be not afraid, they may have their bolts and bars, and their threats, but if the time has come, the time for which I have waited so long, when Seymour shall commit himself by his vices to public ruin and disgrace, my revenge is accomplished, and that revenge shall be your safety." With these words Dorcas took her departure, leaving Emily in strong doubts as to the extent to which she might rely on being rescued by her from the nefarious designs of Captain Seymour, and in still stronger doubts as to her sanity.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Oh! save me from suspense, for sure that is  
The greatest torture which the soul can know."

OLD PLAY.

THREE days had elapsed since Emily had been forced away from her friends by the myrmidons of Captain Seymour—three days of anxiety and suffering, sharper than any she had yet known. The power of old Dorcas to assist her seemed likely to prove less efficient than her will, for, after the arrival of the Captain at the Turreted House, which took place the day following that on which Emily was conveyed there, she saw the old woman alone but once, when she whispered to her that she was herself suspected, but that if she could upon any pretext get beyond the gates, she would walk to the nearest town, which was five miles distant, and procure the interference of the authorities on Emily's behalf. As two days, however, elapsed after this, and the old woman gave her no hope of release, the spirits of Emily quite sunk; the more so, too, that on the third morning, the man Holmes brought her breakfast to the turret chamber, where she was held a close prisoner. From the non-appearance of Dorcas, indeed, Emily would have been inclined to believe that she had effected her purpose of escape, and had gone in search of legal aid, but of this hope she was deprived by Holmes, who told her, with a brutal sneer, "that they had found out the trick which had been planned between her and her friend Dorcas."

"The ungrateful old hag!" he added, "if the Captain had taken my advice, he would have done with her long ago. I never thought, not I, that she was as true as she seemed; she was a deal too cantankerous, and prated too much about her daughter, as if a mad woman never killed herself before or since. However, Miss Forester, your business has settled that of old Dorcas, and I just now turned her quietly back from the gate through which she was trying to slip, and locked her up in the kitchen to get ready your wedding supper; for, please Heaven, Miss Emily, you will be a bride to-night, as my



master's friend, the reverend Mr. Dean, will be here by six o'clock. Gregson has gone out to meet him, and as the Captain has got a license, you will be married as quietly and snugly as possible."

"If this Mr. Dean be, as you and Captain Seymour represent him, an ordained minister of the church," said Emily, "I trust to find in him a protector and not a foe. He will not, he cannot, attempt the sacrilegious fraud of pretending to unite any woman in marriage without her consent, and I will die sooner than I will become the wife of Captain Seymour."

"As to what the reverend Mr. Dean can or will attempt, Miss Forester," said the man, "you know nothing about it. Lors! my dear, he is not one of the quiet old fellows that you would fancy for a parson, but a wicked, raking, runtiple rogue; drinking, and gambling, and swearing like a trooper. Bless my soul, Miss Forester, it shows what an innocent little chicken you are, that you don't know the character of parson Dean; why, he has run through two fortunes, been horse-whipped for swindling, imprisoned for debt, and had up before the magistrates half-a-dozen times, for beating the girls who are fools enough to live with him. He take your part against he Captain! Oh, no, don't flatter yourself with that. I'll be sworn he will consider it the finest fun in the world to tie a woman in marriage against her will, and that he has been at least as savage as the Captain that he could not come down here along with him and finish such a droll job at once; which he couldn't do, only because, the night the Captain left town, he was locked up for an assault. However, he's safe to be here to-day, so you had better get ready for your wedding, Miss Forester, for married you will be to-night, with your consent or without it; and, after all, Captain Seymour is a handsome fellow, and worse things might happen to you than to be compelled to marry him, so you had as well submit with a good grace as a bad one."

With this very philosophical counsel, Mr. Holmes withdrew; but however excellent his advice might be, poor Emily could

not govern her feelings to follow it. Indeed, the conduct of Captain Seymour, in stealing her from her friends, entering into the vile plots of Mrs. Danby, and acknowledging, with an audacity of baseness, that it was in consideration of the fifty thousand pounds offered by that lady, that he would compel Emily to become his wife, had changed the feelings of contempt and dislike with which she had always regarded him, into those of absolute loathing and abhorrence. Since his arrival at the Turreted House, he had not even observed towards her the courtesy of gentlemanly manners, or even mentioned love, as a palliation of his conduct. The passion which he had once professed to entertain for Emily, he had openly told her, was converted, by her repeated rejections, into a kind of hatred, so that it was for the sake of money and revenge alone, that he purposed to marry her.

The coolness, too, with which he expressed his conviction of his power to force her into this odious marriage, had so terrified the defenceless Emily, that when, about an hour after the man Holmes had left her, she heard the step of Seymour himself upon the turret stairs, it was with difficulty that she could preserve herself from fainting.

It should be observed, that since he presented himself before Emily in the Turreted House, in the character of her jailor and abductor, Captain Seymour had laid aside all the fantastic fopperies of manner, which, when Emily knew him in London, had seemed his chief characteristic. He was no longer the mincing, affected man of fashion, but a person much less ridiculous, and far more dangerous—a bold, determined ruffian, a wretch lost to all sense of honour and decent pride; a desperate and ruined gambler, who, for the means to indulge the one vile passion, would have sold himself, soul and body, to the Eternal Enemy, and who laughed at the iniquity of compelling a poor defenceless girl to link herself to his hateful destiny, when, by that cruelty and wrong, he could secure fifty thousand pounds.

*Captain Seymour was a handsome man, but the effect of*

his good looks had always been, in the estimation of Emily, marred by his insufferable affectation, and evident self-esteem. The features of Captain Seymour were, perhaps, smaller than became perfect masculine beauty, and his dark blue eyes would have become a lady. The air of impertinent disdain, however, with which, when in London, he had been accustomed to mingle his offensive overtures of love to Emily, was now totally laid aside, and there was a flush upon his cheeks, and an audacious glance in his eye, which, early as was the hour, Emily could not but attribute to an undue indulgence in wine.

"So, my pretty prisoner," said the Captain, throwing upon the table, near to which Emily sat, a parcel which he held in his hand, "I thought it would break your heart, quite, not to be attired, at your bridal, in the costume of a bride; so, at some trouble, I assure you, I have procured for you a lace dress and a veil."

"Captain Seymour," answered Emily, indignantly, pushing the parcel aside, "this is to add insult to injury. You need not thus mock my wretchedness—I will not become your wife—if I was indifferent to you before, your present conduct arouses my hatred. You are the basest, and meanest, no less than the most cruel and unprincipled of men. If you merited the name of a man, you would disdain conduct such as this; you would disdain to force into a marriage with yourself, a woman, who at once avows her dislike of you, and her love for another."

"Ah, my pretty darling," said the Captain, throwing himself into a chair beside Emily, and attempting to seize her hand, "those sentiments you are spouting, would be very pretty in a novel, or on the stage, where, by-the-by, I believe you would have made your fortune; but in real life, my charmer, they are somewhat out of place. Love is a pretty thing, but *fifty thousand* representations of our beloved sovereign, stamped on a piece of gold, are far prettier. Indeed, my charmer, I *am not unjust*; I can, to a certain degree, excuse your anger.

It is not pleasant to be compelled to give up an Earl, a handsome fellow, too, with large and unencumbered estates, in behalf of a poor soldier, with nothing to look to save a commission in the Guards, that costs more than it is worth, and the fifty thousand pounds which are to be bestowed on him with your own fair hand. But in love, as in war, sweet Emily, we must take our chance, and, if every bullet in battle has its commission, so surely has Cupid's shafts; and, as Cupid, and Fortune too, have decreed that you shall be mine, you had as well bear your fate with a good grace as a bad one, and I promise you, on my part, that if you will conduct yourself as an amiable bride, as loving as you are pretty, I will do my best to forget your past contempt, and make you an affectionate and forgiving husband."

"Captain Seymour," replied Emily, who had more than once sought to interrupt this tirade, "you make yourself at once odious and contemptible. I will not, I cannot yet believe, that I shall be so abandoned by Heaven, as to be compelled to surrender to your vile designs; but, if I were so, if I were nominally your wife, be assured that I will not be bound by vows which my heart cannot ratify—that if I left this house, with the name of wife, I would at once apply to the law to release me from a bond so hateful."

"Sweet Emily, I do not doubt you for that," answered the Captain, "but you must remember, the law will not release a woman from the control of her husband, unless she can plead ill usage against him, and of that, Emily, I will take care you shall not have to complain. I hate you too much—yes, I hate you too much. You shall not have an excuse for escaping from fetters which I know will be odious to you, and with which I will punish you for preferring Alverston to me—for treating me with contempt and insolence, even before you knew him. Oh, do not suppose, Emily, that men, more than women, forgive the rejection of their love. My wife you must and shall be, and, all your life to come, I will make you weep in secret *over the scorn with which you have treated me, yet give you no plea to murmur publicly against me.*"

"But I will not become your wife!" reiterated Emily. "You may indeed, as I understand is your intention, bring hither a man who disgraces the name of a Christian clergyman, to aid you in the execution of your vile plots—it is still for me to resist them; he may indeed read over the marriage ceremony, but it is beyond your power, or his, to compel me to make the necessary responses, nor will I sign any certificate or other paper avowing myself your wife."

"Dear Emily," said the Captain, "these heroics are very pretty, but they are also very useless. If there existed the smallest chance of your escaping from this cage, where I shall hold you, my little bird, till you are tamed, there would be some sense in your indignation; but there is none. Submit you must, sooner or later, and therefore, as I before told you, it had better be with a good grace, and at first. It were well not to irritate me further, for I candidly tell you, that after the contempt you have shown, my poverty alone conquers my pride, and I shall marry you for the fifty thousand pounds proposed by your aunt as your dowry; to which fifty thousand, by-the-by, I shall insist upon her adding the surrender of Elmwood, for I shall not, under the circumstances; consent to her retaining the bulk of Sir Matthew Forester's fortune, since she has been compelled to admit that she has no legal right, or moral right either, to the possession of a shilling of it."

"And you, you," exclaimed Emily, with bitterness, "will you presume to speak of the rights, legal or moral, of Mrs. Danby: you, who are trampling on every law, legal or divine! Oh, be assured that no measure of your enormous wickedness shall avail you! If even your force or fraud compel me to be called your wife, I will not maintain the duty of a wife to such a husband; the fruits which you promise to yourself for your wickedness shall wither before your eyes; I will proclaim you to the world at the bar of justice; you shall account for sharing in the deadly crimes of Mrs. Danby!"

"You forget, charming Emily," said the Captain, "the wife shares too in the disgrace of her husband. I think you

will hesitate ere you encounter such shame. At all events, I shall run the risk; and not to interfere with your little preparations for our very promising bridal, I will now bid you farewell, with the warning, however, that none of your pretty furies will avail this evening with me or my friend Dean to abate a jot of our purpose."

With these words Captain Seymour quitted the apartment, and Emily, when no longer borne up by the excitement of their interview, sunk into the very torpor of despair.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

"Go, get you to Francis Seacoal, bid him bring his pen and ink-horn to jail, we are now to examination of these men."

STUCK AND ABOUT NOTHING.

THOUGH all the approaches to Captain Seymour's fastness of the Turreted House were sufficiently lonely, there was another and more public road to it than that by which Emily Forester had been conveyed thither; and as on this public road there were to be found certain houses for refreshment, where sufficiently good ale was sold, and brandy and hollands—which were perhaps of the better quality, that it was seldom any government duty had been paid upon them—it was along this road that Mr. Gregson betook himself to meet the Reverend Mr. Dean. Indeed, that very excellent and pious person, not having been before a visitor at Captain Seymour's retreat, had arranged during the hasty interview which he had with the latter gentleman, on the night of his leaving town, that he would wait at a certain inn, or rather ale-house, known by the sign of the Cornish Giant, which stood at the opposite extremity of the heath, a corner of which the abductors of Emily Forester had crossed, when conveying her to the Turreted House. This inn stood at about five miles from the nearest town, and perhaps two from the Turreted House, but, in consequence of the winding nature of the road, it was distant not more than a quarter of a mile from

the sea shore; indeed its proximity to the ocean might have been dangerous during heavy gales, but that the inn was sheltered at the back by a beetling rock, which protected it from the storms, whether they swept over the ocean in its rear, or the waste and barren heath that lay before it.

At about two hundred yards from the Cornish Giant, a devious path wound first under the brow of the rocks, and, finally descending their slippery sides, led down to the beach. The rocks indeed, one of which so securely sheltered the inn, formed a kind of semicircle into which ran a creek or inlet of the sea, which was a harbour for small vessels, though the task of climbing the precipitous and beetling rocks above it was one of some danger. Men of desperate enterprise, however, must run desperate risks, and the nook that sheltered the sea near the Cornish Giant, and the inn itself, was so little known, that more than one smuggling craft landed its goods there. Hence, as the inn lay not on a high road, these smugglers, and travellers who were belated on the heath in proceeding to the little town of T——, were almost its only guests.

The worthy Mr. Gregson, who was heartily sick of his three days' sojourn at the Turreted House, where he found the society of Mr. Holmes alone somewhat dull, and who was besides eager to see Emily actually the wife of Captain Seymour, that he might touch the rich reward promised to him by Mrs. Danby and the Captain, set off right cheerfully on his errand of meeting the Reverend Mr. Arthur Dean. The day, however, though at so early a season of the year, was anything but agreeable. The sun, which had risen brightly, was at the turn of noon enveloped in stormy clouds, a cold wind swept over the waste, and the rain fell in one continuous and steady shower; a persevering, determined rain it was, which wetted Mr. Gregson to the skin, even during his short two miles' ride from the Turreted House. Now, the excellent Mr. Gregson was not of a disposition that could be called amiable—indeed he had about him a sort of nervous irritability that was somewhat easily roused; and, as he loved his own comfort ve

much, and the shrill wind and driving rain made him very uncomfortable, he entered the Cornish Giant in a humour that might have scared the valiant Cornishman who was of old so formidable a foe of the giants. The landlord of the Cornish Giant was well acquainted with the very honourable Captain Seymour, and therefore he came forward with a profusion of bows to take charge of the little rough pony which Gregson rode. Gregson, however, whose visit the landlord had been warned of, answered all his civilities with a kind of growl, such as might have suited a bear in its very worst humour; and as he followed the man into the inn, bade him bring some of his best liquor. On entering the large, low-roofed kitchen, however, which was in fact the room in which the guests were generally entertained, he started on perceiving that it was well nigh filled by a large party of men attired in the costume of sailors, but beneath whose loose jackets he, in more than one instance, noticed the butt end of a pistol or a dirk.

"Heyday! master landlord," he said with an oath, "you have fine times, it seems; a houseful of guests in a lone district such as this. On my soul, I think I shall be about setting up for an innkeeper; from appearances here, I should judge that the trade is a thriving one."

"Pretty fair, sir, pretty fair," said the landlord; "but to tell you the truth, as you are a friend of the gentleman at the Turreted House, I may own that I do not depend upon chance customers. These are some merry traders who have been recommended here by the people at St. Edith's, lower down the coast; indeed one of the St. Edith's men is here with them now, he is called Black Will, but I warrant him as fair in his dealings as any man in his trade, far or near, so that if you are inclined to do a little business, sir, to secure a chest of choice tea, or a box of laces or silks, or a few kegs of the choicest brandy, you had better not lose the chance of knowing Black Will."

"What's that you are saying about me, old Cheat-the-gallows?" said a rough voice from a man sitting near the fire.



It should be observed that the day was dark with the wind and driving rain, the casement windows of the inn very small, and the kitchen moreover filled with smoke from the cigars which the sailors had in their mouths, and the cans of grog that stood before them. Monstrous and bold too, in its way, as had been the villany of Mr. Gregson, he was one of those persons who can remember, on certain occasions, that discretion is the better part of valour, and while the mention of the people at St. Edith's excited his curiosity, it also, to a certain extent, awakened his fears; for it was at second hand he had dealt with the people of that village, nor, from what he had heard of them, was he by any means desirous to come into personal communication with them. He therefore suddenly changed the loud and boisterous tone with which he had entered the inn, and protesting that he feared his purse was not long enough to allow of his dealing with the gentleman rejoicing in the cognomen of Black Will, took the seat which was offered him beside that worthy.

Black Will was indeed a person whose appearance might have startled a bolder man than Mr. Gregson. Above six feet in height, his brawny frame had not about it an ounce of superfluous flesh, his iron fist might literally have felled an ox, his voice was as rough as the north wind in winter; and, to complete his attractions, his features were harsh, his complexion dyed, by exposure to the weather, to the copper hue of the red Indian, and the whole lower part of his visage enveloped in a fell of black, wiry hair.

Such was the man, who, rising from the oaken settle, as Gregson timidly made his way through the crowd of persons assembled, offered him his can of liquor, and protested that he was glad to become acquainted with any of Captain Seymour's friends; "for, let me tell you," he added, "the Captain and I have had a little business, too, in our time. Oh, oh, fine gentlemen like to get foreign goods cheap sometimes, as well as fine ladies."

Gregson accepted the invitation to drink, and then, as far as the smoke and darkness would permit, endeavoured to

scrutinise his companions. This, however, was not a very easy task, for they were either enveloped in smoke, or, holding their heads down, conversed with each other in under tones, not much resembling the boisterous manner of sailors in general, or Black Will in particular. They were all clad alike, in the rough garb of sailors, mostly with pea-jackets and sou'westers; two only, who sat so much behind their companions that Gregson could not obtain a glimpse of their features, had round hats, made of tarpaulin, lying on the table before which they sat. It should be observed, that on the other hand of Black Will, when Gregson took the proffered seat beside him, there sat a young man, apparently about thirty years of age, dressed like the rest of the company, as a sailor, but in garments of better material and more becoming fashion. Even amid the obscurity of the place, Gregson could perceive that the countenance of this young man, though bronzed by the weather, might have been called handsome, though, as the blaze from the fire occasionally flashed across his features, it showed their open, candid expression, mingled with one of deep grief. A steaming can of liquor stood before him, as well as the rest, and, after remaining silent for a few minutes, he drank deeply; and then, turning to Black Will, he said, "Send I may live! but it is an odd chance, old messmate, that has brought us here together the first morning that I have trodden Cornish ground; or British ground either for that matter, these five years."

"Well; it is an odd chance, Ned Merrie," answered Black Will, "but, I call it a good one, for I am right earnest glad to see thee again, old boy; and main as glad as though they were my own, to hear thee has got plenty of shiners in the sack. To see, now, how good luck comes out of ill—to think now that thou shouldst run off in such a passion, half crazed, as thou didst five years ago, because thee wast jilted by that giddy wench, Phoebe Boyton, whom thou wast well quit of, and come back young and good-looking, and grown rich, while she has been mouldering in her grave these three years past."

How!" exclaimed the man who had been called Morris, in a faltering tone, while, despite the gloom of the place, Gregson could perceive his ruddy cheek grow pale, "is Phœbe dead? Phœbe, so young, so beautiful, is she dead? Could not his wealth, and his love—for whose sake she well nigh broke as true a heart as ever woman won—could not these save her? did she perish so young? Poor, unhappy Phœbe! what was her disease, the circumstances of her death? Let me know all—all, Will; for you know it, doubtless, since, from what you have just said to this person, you have still a knowledge of the doings of that villain, Seymour."

"No, no, Ned," answered Black Will, "it will not be good for thee to hear anything more about Phœbe, since thou hast such a foolish, tender heart about the wench still. There, be satisfied, she came to a bad end. How should she meet with another? she deserved all the ill that happened to her, and pity from no one, and, least of all, from thee."

"So she came to a bad end, Phœbe Boyton—a bad end? Ah!" and Ned Morris pronounced that ejaculation in the deep under tone, which is so often indicative of the heart's deepest anguish. After a minute's pause, however, he seemed to rally his spirits, and again addressing his old comrade, said, "Come, Will, this is folly; why should you not speak out to me, a rough fellow, whose heart, I can tell thee, has been pretty well hardened in the course of the last five years? and I should like to know all about the end of my old sweetheart—my first love, you know, as the girls say—Phœbe Boyton, sweet, pretty Phœbe Boyton; so, speak out, man, speak out. What was it? Her captain, I suppose, her fine gentleman, grew tired of her, and Phœbe was abandoned in the great, wicked city of London."

"No, no, not that, Ned;" said Black Will; "something that, perhaps, you will think more shocking."

"More shocking!" repeated Morris. "Oh, no, Will! nothing can be more shocking than for a young girl to be abandoned, in the way I mean, in the streets of London! Mark you, my

lad, since we parted five years back, I have learned to know what these great cities are, and London, above all the rest, for a young girl to be left in. No, no; worse could not have been for Phoebe, than to be left in the streets of London. If the Captain did not do that, he is not so bad, after all."

"Well, Ned, I will not dispute with you on the matter, one way or another," answered Black Will; "but, to my notions, it is no great odds whether a fine gentleman, such as Captain Seymour, leaves a poor girl to die of want, or getting into bad company in the streets of London, or brings her down, as he did, to the Turreted House, to make a kind of prisoner of her till she goes mad, and kills herself, as your poor Phoebe did; for that, in plain truth, Ned, was the end of her: she went mad, and threw herself out of a window, and was killed."

"So, that was the end of Phoebe—that was how she came by her death, was it?" said Morris, and his tone was so unnaturally calm, even when contrasted with his late excitement, that it caused great surprise, and, though he was not quite aware of it, some alarm in Gregson.

"Just so," returned Black Will; "but, I am bound to tell you, Ned, that the Captain seemed mortal sorry when the thing happened, and sent for old Dame Boyton, from Truro, and has kept her at the Turreted House ever since, where, to tell you the truth, Ned, I believe she does a great deal of dirty work that she ought not to do for him, in the way of helping him to serve other poor wenches as bad as he served her own poor Phoebe. It may be, that Dame Boyton does this out of revenge, but revenge of that sort does not come square with my notions, Ned."

"Nor mine," replied Morris. Then, with a strange kind of laugh, he added, "And so, Will, this precious Captain Seymour comes down to the Turreted House still, sometimes, does he?"

"Sure to, my boy, when he has got any mischief on hand," said Black Will; "and it is seldom that the year goes on with-

out his having some little job or other on hand, which the law won't wink at, and then, what a safe place is the Turreted House!"

"Really, Mr. Black Will, since that is your name," said Gregson, now interposing in the conversation, "for a gentleman who calls himself the friend of Captain Seymour, you make very free with his character."

"A proof of our friendship, sir," answered Black Will, with a sneer. "How should any one believe that I am friendly with Captain Seymour, if I did not speak ill of him?"

"Then you may mend your fashion of speaking of him soon, if you would speak the truth, my friend," said Gregson, "for the Captain, I can tell you, is going to turn a good moral man, and get married."

"Indeed!" said Black Will; "and what is the bribe? for I know the Captain would not marry for a trifle."

"Enough to make the wedding merry, and a little to look to afterwards," said Gregson. "I assure you, the affair is to come off to-night; I am sent here to wait for the person, and, in good time, here comes the very man." In fact, even as Gregson spoke, a gentleman entered, and inquired of the landlord of the inn, if there was not a person waiting there to show him the way to the Turreted House, the abode of Captain Seymour.

Gregson, upon hearing this inquiry, rose from his seat, and was thrusting himself eagerly forward, when one of the sailors, a stout, strong-limbed fellow, pushed him aside, and, presenting himself to the new comer, said, "I believe, sir, you are no other than the Reverend Arthur Dean."

The so-called reverend gentleman—who was a person of spare figure; in height, scarcely reaching the middle standard, and with a countenance, the complexion of which was dark and sallow, the forehead low, and the expression sinister—was so unhappily conversant with the manœuvres of the law, that he positively hesitated to answer to his own name. The hesitation however, in the present instance, did not avail him

for the man who had demanded his name, throwing off his pea-jacket and sou'-wester, appeared in the apparel of an officer. "Come, come, Mr. Dean," he said, "your dodges won't do now, in no fashion; this is an ugly business altogether of Captain Seymour's—you had better have nothing to do with it, but come quietly with me, under the warrant which I have to arrest you, for one of your dishonoured bills."

For once the confidence of Mr. Dean was at fault, and he stammered, he scarce knew what, of being invited into Cornwall by Captain Seymour, in order to celebrate the marriage of that gentleman.

"Oh, yes, we know all about that, Mr. Dean; more than you do, perhaps," answered the officer. "It may be you don't know that there is one Mrs. Danby concerned in this affair, who may think herself well off if she escapes hanging; for it will be none the better for her that she took the Captain in partnership of her rogueries, and a little the worse for him."

These announcements of the officer, if little agreeable to the reverend gentleman whom he addressed, were still less so to Gregson, who, with all his villany, was at heart an arrant coward; and no sooner did he hear the name of Mrs. Danby mentioned than he attempted to quit the apartment. This design, however, he was not permitted to accomplish, for, committing Mr. Dean to the custody of another of the pretended sailors, the officer then turned to Mr. Gregson, and arrested him also upon the charge of being an active participator in the guilt of Mrs. Danby. Leaving Mr. Dean and Mr. Gregson in the hands of the officers, to be conveyed to London, the remainder of the sailors, who were in fact a disguised party of the coast-guard, divided themselves into two parties, one portion of which took possession of the inn, as the resort and hiding place of the contrabandists, and the other, in company with three more members of the London police, and the two persons whom Gregson had noticed as conversing the background, announced their intention of proceeding under the guidance of Black Will, to the Turreted House

"Dog!" exclaimed Gregson, grinding his teeth, as this man passed him, "it is you, then, who have been so trusted by the fools whom I trusted at St. Edith's, you who are the traitor!"

"Aye, aye, master," answered Black Will, "but never growl for that; if there be a chance yet for your escaping the hands of the hangman, I promise you it is but through my treason, and because your wife is not quite murdered, and has escaped."

Gregson replied with a volley of oaths, and the party of the coast-guard and the police officers was then setting off, when the young sailor, Morris, stepped forward, and begged to be permitted to accompany them to the Turreted House, to which he could, he said, furnish them with an easy mode of entrance, as he had spent much of his time there when a boy.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

"Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge  
Had stomach for them all."

OTHELLO.

THE day, which was one of the most terrible she had known, was wearing wofully away with Emily Forester, whose apprehensions increased as hour after hour crept on, and she felt, with the lapse of each, how defenceless she was—how completely at the mercy of the man, unscrupulous alike in his libertinism and his greed of money. The hollow sighing of the wind too, the chill patter of the rain against the windows of her prison chamber, was in unison with Emily's melancholy thoughts. Once she approached those windows, and a horrible temptation assailed her as she gazed from them over the wild country beyond, and thought of the fate of Phœbe Boyton; perhaps, had not the iron bars secured the window, she might, in the frenzy of her own despair, have followed that fearful example. As it was, she gazed wildly round the chamber in search of some sure and sudden mode of self-destruction; then her eye fell upon the knives which lay with her untasted meal up

the table, and snatching one of them, she concealed it in the bosom of her dress. Then a smile of miserable satisfaction crossed her lips, as she murmured to herself, "At least I shall be safe from the worst, from the foul dishonour of a compelled marriage with a villain. Ah! the sin was not the unhappy Phoebe's—it will not be mine! Let my blood, like hers, rest on the soul of him who forces me to suicide!"

Then the poor Emily burst into tears and bitter sobs, for, to contemplate parting with life was very dreadful; so young, too, and having known so much misery; and, as misery hardens into selfishness the most generous of hearts, Emily now reproached herself for her journey into Cornwall, which had thrown her into the power of Captain Seymour. What had she to do with sacrificing herself for one who had been unjust to her? and, after all, she had not accomplished her purpose—she had destroyed herself in vain. There is nothing more frightful than to feel that fate is against virtue and good-feeling—that if we had been less generous, more worldly and selfish, we should have done better with the world! And this reflection, in all the intensity of its bitterness, tortured the soul of Emily Forester. Fixed, however, in the purpose to plunge the knife, which she had concealed, into her heart, rather than become the wife of Seymour, she schooled herself into a kind of dreary composure, and, except that each time she heard the old clock of the Turreted House tell the flight of another hour, a convulsive shudder shook her frame, she exhibited no outward manifestations of her inward anguish. Meanwhile, Captain Seymour, who, with all his libertinism and lack of principle, had never before ventured upon an action so flagrant as that which he now had in contemplation, did not feel quite at ease with himself. As the day wore on, too, he began to feel uneasy that his clerical friend did not make his appearance; the more so, that ample time had elapsed for Gregson to have returned from his errand of meeting the excellent clergyman at the Cornish Giant. Finally, with a malediction upon the head of the reverend Mr. Dean,



he apprehended, was detained in town by his own peccadilloes, the Captain despatched his valet also to the Cornish Giant, with orders to return immediately with Gregson, whether Mr. Dean had arrived or not.

After the departure of the servant, Captain Seymour fell into a reverie of no very pleasing character. He was very uneasy at the non-arrival of Mr. Dean, for he had heard from Gregson that his wife, the *ci-devant* Ruth Harrison, had made known some particulars of Mrs. Danby's guilt to the friends of Emily, and he was not without an apprehension that some untoward accident might discover to them the place of her imprisonment, before he had compelled her to become his wife. There are times, too, with the most hardened and obdurate of the wicked even, when the past will arise with a threatening aspect for the future. And thus it was with Seymour: the form of the unfortunate Phœbe Boyton, all crushed and mangled, as he had seen it after her fall from the turret window, presented itself with painful distinctness before him. There was wine upon the table and Seymour drank deeply; but the terrible vision would not be dispelled by its fumes—rather it seemed to grow more horribly distinct, and the stalwart form of Phœbe's lover, the young sailor with whom she had broken faith for his sake, and whom he knew well as a boy on his father's estates, rose, too, beside the image of the dead girl. There was something even more ominous to the mental eye of Seymour, in the aspect of that vision than in the other, and, resolved to shake off what he considered to be a superstition, he rose from his chair. Then a low chuckle met his ears, and, in the now thickly gathering twilight, he perceived two persons standing near the door of the apartment, which, in his abstraction, he had not observed to open.

In one of these intruders he recognised the old woman, Dorcas, whom he sharply reproved for entering without knocking at the door; to the other, a man and a stranger, he addressed an eager inquiry as to whether he had come from Mr. Dean.

"Oh no, no, Captain dear," said Dorcas, with a renewal of the chuckling laugh which sounded so unpleasantly to the ears of Seymour, "never a bit is this person a messenger from Parson Dean. No, no; he is an older acquaintance. He'll find a bride for you, though; and I'll leave him to tell you where, while I go and set free the poor little bird you have locked in the turret cage. Oh, oh, but this is a good day, a pleasant day! one that makes up to me for all I have suffered in watching and helping in your villainies, with the face of my dead girl always before me, reproaching me that you escaped so long. Good bye, Captain; good-by! a sound rest there will be for you to-night."

As the old woman uttered the last words, she quitted the room, and the stranger, who had kept near the door, looked it after her. A horrible foreboding, a terror such as he had never before experienced, fastened upon the heart of Seymour; but it was with an imperious accent that he demanded the name and business of the stranger.

"The evening is drawing on apace, Seymour," replied the stranger in a hollow tone, "but there is enough of daylight for the work we have to do. You do not remember me amid these shadows—perhaps you would not in the blaze of noon; for fatigue, and travel, and the cankering memory of your villainies have strangely altered me from the boy who would once have laid down his life for you, before the hour when the world's forms, your rank, and wealth, and villainies put a gulf between you and him. I am Edward Morris—I am the lover of Phoebe Boyton, and I am here to avenge her death."

Seymour recoiled at these words, and sank back in the chair he had lately quitted, faltering out, "Her death! what vengeance should you seek for that? I had no hand in it—I grieved over that horrible accident."

"Liar! as well as seducer," exclaimed Morris, "you murdered her as surely and more basely than if you had plunged a knife in her heart; you robbed her of her virtue, you destroyed her peace of mind, you drove her mad, and in her  
12 2

insanity she destroyed herself. The law, it is true, could not punish you for that murder—that killing both of the body and the soul, for Phoebe was good and pure before you came with your flatteries and your falsehoods to mar our happiness. And I, I could support life, while I thought she lived and was content with the infamy you had heaped upon her; I could endure that you should live unpunished for the wrong which she, upon whom it was inflicted, did not feel. But this day, after my long absence from England, I have learned the truth; I have learned that Phoebe did not live willingly a wanton, and that in her shame and madness she destroyed herself. But you, villain as you are, were the real murderer; her blood is on your soul and calls for vengeance—blood for blood. I will myself wreak vengeance upon you—you shall not quit this room alive!”

“This is madness in you, Morris,” said Captain Seymour, affecting to assume a courage he did not feel; “because that wretched girl destroyed herself in a fit of insanity, would you murder me in cold blood?”

“No, I will not murder—I will kill you,” answered Morris, with a terrible composure. “Base as you are, I know that, did I suffer you to quit this room, you would avail yourself of what the world calls your superior rank, to refuse to fight a duel with me; and therefore, when I fell in this morning with men who were on your track for a new villany, I offered to accompany them here, to show them the way through the little door in the east turret by which we used to get into the house late at night, and unknown to your father, when we were boys. I rendered them this service, upon condition that, while they went to liberate the lady whom you have basely abducted, I might have the liberty of speaking with you alone. We have, however, no time to spare—they will not be long. Take this pistol then; there is light enough for us to see each other across the room, let alone over this small table, and at no greater distance shall you stand. I am willing to lose my own life, which has long indeed been a weary one, so that I am certain you do not escape with yours.”

By the dim light of the dying day, and by the blaze of the fire, the wretched and horror-stricken Seymour could mark the cool, yet savage determination in the looks of his adversary, who kept carefully between him and the door, and who was a man of muscular power so greatly superior, that in a mere contest of strength Seymour would have stood no chance. He did not, however, take the pistol which Morris offered, but sought to try the effect of expostulation, the rather that he heard steps and voices in the gallery on which the chamber opened.

"This is the raving of a maniac, Morris," said he; "worse madness than that of Phoebe Boyton, poor girl! she was not worth the loss of men's lives, Morris, neither yours nor mine. Stand aside then, let me pass!"

"Coward!" cried Morris between his shut teeth, and grasping Seymour by the collar as he spoke, "if you do not take the pistol, and the even chance which I give you against myself, I will brain you with its butt-end. Be quick, decide! Oh, do not struggle and flatter yourself with a hope to escape me; that door is strong, I could strangle you before they burst it open."

In fact, though the wretched Seymour now heard the loud voices of men without the door, which shook with their endeavours to open it, he felt the grasp of Morris tightening so strongly on his throat that, to avoid immediate strangulation, he extended his hand for the weapon. Then a wild laugh from Morris was heard by those without, followed by the report of pistols; the next minute the heavy oaken door yielded with a crash to a blow from an iron bar taken from the shutters in the gallery, and a crowd of men with lights poured into the apartment.

The spectacle there presented was frightful; both Captain Seymour and Morris lay extended on the floor—the latter dead, for his adversary's bullet had passed through his brain; the Captain, though also mortally wounded, had to endure the agonies of a slower death, while perfect consciousness

remained to increase the body's torments with those of the mind.

He moaned heavily as he was raised from the floor. "Ah!" then exclaimed a female voice, "there is some music in that sound; so Captain, fine, dainty gentleman that you are, is your hour come at last? Oh, but this is a fair night, a merry night for me, and almost makes amends for that on which my Phæbe died!"

"Out of the way, thou cantankerous, venomous hag!" said Black Will, who was directing the men who were raising the wounded Seymour; "is it not enough that the man is dying—won't that content thy spite? It would, an' thou wert not as black a sinner as he is himself. Did'st thou not, in thy devilish revenge for the fate of thy daughter, help that wretch in ruining others as she was ruined. Get out of my sight, beldame, the gaol or the workhouse is the proper place for thee!"

Doreas shrank back, partly abashed at this reproof; and at that moment Emily Forester appeared, advancing along the gallery with the two sailors who had, at the Cornish Giant, eluded the observation of the man Gregson. Black Will hastened to prevent their entering the chamber where the miserable man now lay on a couch, writhing in the agonies of death. "Go back, my lord!" he said, to the younger of the apparent sailors, who was supporting the bewildered and half-insensible Emily; "go back, this is no scene for the lady to witness; Captain Seymour is wounded, dying; let some one fetch a surgeon, though I fear there is no hope; take the lady into another room, Mrs. Mills and Harry will be here soon, I sent a messenger for them when we left the Cornish Giant."

The person whom Black Will addressed made no reply, for he was wholly occupied with Emily, who, weakened with watching, fasting, and weeping, was overcome by the revelation of spirits occasioned by her unexpected liberation, and sunk in a heavy swoon in the arms of Lord Alverton, who,

in the disguise of a sailor, had, along with Mr. Price and some London officers, tracked the man Gregson into Cornwall; saved his wife, when left to perish from the effects of his ill-usage; accomplished, under the directions of that weak, but now thoroughly repentant woman, the purpose for which Emily had ventured into Cornwall; and finally rescued the young girl herself from the designs of the unprincipled Seymour.

By the advice of Black Will, Lord Alverston carried the insensible Emily back to her chamber, where Dorcas was summoned to attend her; his companion, the lawyer Price, proceeded to the apartment in which Seymour lay, from whose lips he received a dying attestation of the vile intrigues of Mrs. Danby, and also a brief statement of the Captain's fatal interview with the wronged and half-maddened Edward Morris. Scarce sufficient strength remained to the wretched Seymour to give these details, which he had scarce accomplished, ere he expired, a few minutes before the arrival of a surgeon at the Turreted House.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"And be these juggling fiends no more believed,  
Who palter with us in a double sense,  
And keep the word of promise to the ear,  
But break it to the hope."

MACBETH.

Does the world's catalogue of cruel and painful duties furnish another so weary, so horrible, as that of the watcher by the bed of death? Oh, the doleful hours of the seemingly endless night, which yet fleets too fast when its leaden moments bring no favourable change!

For many weary days and nights had Julia Warrender sat by the sick bed of her husband, and hopes and fears—those wild hopes and fears that rend the very heart-strings—had tortured her by turns, as the patient rallied or sunk, and

his life yet trembled, as it were, in the balance. But now Julia knew that there was no hope—a fresh and violent vomiting of blood had rendered it impossible for the young man to recover; the medical attendant had said he would not live through the night. The horror, which none other equals, of watching for the moment when the last fearful struggle shall commence—the struggle which parts the immortal soul from the frail and perishable body—forbade in Julia much thought of the position in which the death of Warrender would place her.

But there were moments when she did think of it, even during that dreadful night; and then, as she shuddered at the blank and dismal future, even upon her obtuse conscience forced itself the question of what she had gained by her craft—she who had, for the few past weeks, plumed herself so much upon having destroyed the prospects of Emily Forester, and obtained a husband for herself. A husband! He lay dying before her; and, to increase the bitterness of her feelings, she had been, when she approached his death-bed, received by his family with a civil constraint, which showed that it was as a matter only of worldly form or duty they had sent for her, and saluted by Warrender himself with a harsh inquiry, as to whose interference he owed her attendance, and an assurance, on his part, that he would rather dispense with it. Julia, however, would not leave him; and Frank, with the facility of temper which had during his life so unfortunately characterised him, permitted her to remain, and divide the care of attending on him with the hired nurse; for he had no mother, and his sisters were too much of fine ladies to endure the disagreeables and confinement of a sick room. No hope of eternity, either for herself or him, had Julia, as she watched by the death-bed of her husband—for Warrender, like herself, had lived a practical Atheist, with not a thought beyond this world and its common, coarse indulgences; and the fear of death had, therefore, fastened on his soul, with all the accumulated

horror with which it never fails to impress those who have no fixed belief in another world, even though they have been guilty of no extraordinary crime. So great, then, was the agony, the terror of death, exhibited by Warrender, at the commencement of his illness, that his actual danger was, with a common, but most mistaken kindness, concealed from him by his family and friends; aye, even up to that night which medical skill had forewarned them would be the last of his existence.

Meanwhile, the hours dragged slowly and wretchedly on. Caroline, who had visited her sister in the early part of the evening, had returned home, to a desolate house, for Mr. Barton was still under arrest, and the barbarously selfish Julia was, since her husband's illness, less inclined than ever to apply to Mrs. Danby on her father's behalf; the Misses Warrender and their father had retired, with an injunction that they should be called, should any change for the worse take place, and Julia and the nurse were left alone with the dying man; the nurse slumbered in her chair, undisturbed by Julia, who was well satisfied to escape her whispered chatter, and indulge, undisturbed, the bitter luxury of her harassing thoughts; the patient, too, slept that dull, heavy sleep which so often precedes the sleep that will never be broken. Midnight was drawing on apace—that mystic hour, which it is not a vain fancy to believe has a peculiar influence on the sick and dying; the weather was dismal, too, the wind howled along the street, the rain beat against the windows, and the fire was sinking low, for Julia feared to renew it, lest the noise should disturb her husband; and thus she sat in silence, till a deep, struggling, convulsive gasp from Warrender, called her to the side of the bed. His slumbers were broken—he was sitting up; but, oh, there was no mistaking that look! it was not that the eye was yet fixed or glazed, or the countenance more pallid than it had been throughout the day, and yet the change was so unmistakeable, so awful, that Julia knew at once that the last sand was running out, the



the wing of the death-angel threw its shadow on that brow.

"Nurse! nurse!" she exclaimed, in a frantic and yet choking accent, "go, make haste, call Mr. Warrender and the young ladies; oh, tell them to come quickly, or they will be too late!"

Then having hurried the nurse from the room, Julia returned to the bedside, and clasped the clammy and cold hands of her husband, and wept, wept, oh! such bitter, such dreadful tears; oh, she could indeed weep wildly for herself!

"Julia, Julia!" exclaimed Warrender, with that energy which is so often shown in the very paroxysms of parting life, "Julia, oh, what is this? Am I dying, am I dying? Have they told you I should die? Oh, no, I shall get better, I am strong, I can hold your hand tightly, I can speak loud. This cannot be death; oh, no, I shall not die, I am so young, I shall not die; speak to me, Julia, I am not dying; oh, I will not die, I will — not — die!"

With a convulsive strength indeed did the unfortunate young man grasp his horror-stricken wife; with a voice strained to a key unnaturally loud did he speak; but when his father and sisters, aghast with affright, rushed into the room, he had fallen back speechless, with his eyes fixed, his limbs convulsed, and his hands still tightly holding those of Julia. With some difficulty Mr. Warrender loosened that dreadful grasp; then, with a motive of, perhaps, mistaken kindness, he forced Julia from the room; in a few minutes the convulsions ceased — all was over; and then the female servants were called up, and the nurse, with their assistance, straightened the limbs, and closed the filmy eyes, and bound up the jaw, and drew a sheet over the moveless form, the fixed and pallid features. Julia, the miserable, distracted Julia, was in fits while these last duties were performed, but so soon as she recovered, she demanded to see her dead husband; and his sisters, with the tenderness and sympathy with which the presence of death touches the most unfeeling, led her into the room. The nurse drew back the curtains of the window and

the bed, for the gray, cold light of a wet morning had now appeared. The sheet was drawn from the head and shoulders of her husband by Julia's hand, but then she recoiled with a cry of horror, that would not have been caused by the customary aspect even of death itself. No; one of the hands had moved from the position in which those of a corpse are always laid, and the head was turned round, so that the side of the face rested on the pillows! The nurse shrank aghast at the sight, and whispered to the Misses Warrender; but Julia, with an hysterical shriek, exclaimed,

"Ah, nurse, do you see what you did? you laid him out and he was not dead, though he is dead now! Oh, what must he have thought, laid out and not dead? oh, it is too horrible, too horrible!"

The fact was, indeed, as Julia said, most horrible; the attendants had mistaken the syncope preceding death for death itself. Such was the last scene of the marriage celebrated in a church hung with BLACK!

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

"I look as if all hell were in my heart,  
And I in hell; nay, surely 'tis so with me,  
For every step I tread, methinks some fiend  
Knocks at my breast and bids it not be quiet!"

VENICE PRESERVED.

Mr. Warrender, who had highly disapproved of his son's marriage with Julia Barton, so coldly invited the young widow to remain at his home till after the funeral, that she rather chose to spend the interval with her sister, at the lodging which Caroline had taken, after the execution on the goods and arrest of their father had deprived them of the house in St. John's Wood.

On the morning of her arrival there, the second after Frank Warrender's death, a letter was brought with the superscription in the well-known hand of Emily Forester:—

post-mark was from a town in Cornwall, and Julia, whose misery required no accumulation, felt as if a blow had been struck upon her heart, as she looked at it. Her powers of endurance, her nerves, had been weakened, by the death of her husband, and handing the letter to her sister, she besought her to read it.

"Julia, dear! do not be frightened," said Caroline, after she had glanced over it. "It is nothing to concern us, only Aunt Danby may look out; all her fine fortune will be taken from her, and I think if she escapes a sea voyage, at the government expense, she may thank Emily for it. What a poor, silly, good-natured fool Emily is! If Aunt Danby had served me as she has served her, I would see her hanged, let alone transported, a thousand times, before I would interfere to save her."

While Caroline thus spoke, her sister had snatched the letter from her hand, and was greedily perusing it.

"You are a fool yourself, Caroline," she said, with her customary tartness, as she refolded the letter, "almost as great a fool as Emily herself, if you do not see that the position of Aunt Danby is of the greatest consequence to us. However, I agree with you, that Emily is a fool—a fool even in the fashion of her good nature, for if she really wished to save Mrs. Danby, after her atrocious conduct, and found Lord Alverston and the rest so inveterate against her, which, by-the-by, shows their good sense, in contradistinction to Emily's generous folly—if, as I said before, she really wished to give the old woman a chance, she should have sent this letter straight to her. However, I like to deal with such fools as Emily is. Get me my bonnet and shawl, dear, and tell the people down stairs to send for a cab."

This command astonished even Caroline. "Why, Julia," she exclaimed, "where are you going? Consider, poor Frank is not yet buried, you surely are not going out."

"Only to visit my aunt, child," answered Julia; "we may go and condole with our relations, I presume; and let me tell

you, Caroline, poor Frank's death makes it necessary to hold fast to Mrs. Danby while we can. Do you not perceive, you foolish girl, that we have been too intimate with her, that we stand no chance with the Earl, or any other friend of Emily? If she is so weakly good-natured, those around her are not. Mrs. Danby shall not walk off with the large amount of plunder in ready money and jewels, which this letter gives her the opportunity to seize; I will have my share, at least. Besides, I may stand the chance of cajoling Emily afterwards; she will, as the Countess of Alverston, have a great deal of money at her command, and I know she will not have the heart to refuse me assistance, when I plead distress."

Caroline Barton had nothing to urge against these remarks of her sister; she sent for the cab, and the so lately widowed Julia, in her way to the house of her aunt, called at the station of the district police, and took an officer with her, whom she desired to remain in the cab, a few doors from her aunt's house, in Belgrave Square, as she knew not whether she might not require his assistance, as she had some unpleasant business on hand, which yet, however, she hoped to settle amicably. This story was very plausible, and, of course, to a lady of Julia's appearance, the company of the officer was granted.

Laura was out, gone on a secret visit to her husband, and Mrs. Danby alone in her boudoir, lost in very melancholy musings, when Julia entered unannounced. She had Emily's letter in her hand.

"Ah, Julia," said Mrs. Danby, rising to greet her niece, "I am sorry for your loss, which I saw announced in this morning's paper; but, perhaps, it will be in the end as well. Warrender had no talent for his profession, and his father was not rich enough, even if he had had the will, to enable him to lead an idle life; your marrying Frank, and so secretly too, was an act of imprudence I should not have supposed you could commit."

"Yes, my dear aunt," answered Julia, with a cold smile.

of manner, "I dare say you were surprised, but the wisest persons in the world do foolish things sometimes; and, at present, I am here to talk, not of my own follies, but of your crimes, and how you can escape the consequences, and I secure some of the profits of them. You see here!"—and as she spoke, Julia extended towards her aunt the letter, with the well known writing of Emily Forester, and the Cornwall post mark—"you see here; this letter is from Emily, who, through the treason to you and the man Gregson, of Mills, who married Ruth Harrison's niece, has discovered the very place in which Sir Matthew Forester was confined among wreckers, smugglers, and wretches of the worst description—Sir Matthew Forester, your uncle, of whom you spread a report that he died two years ago, when travelling for his health in France. Oh, do not tremble and look towards the door, because I use a loud tone; I am only speaking of matters of which we have often spoken before, and which will be blazoned to the world before two days are over. It will all be known then—all those secrets, for the concealment of which you have paid so high a price—how you and the vile woman, Harrison, administered a drug to the old man, which produced the semblance of death—how, by the aid of Gregson, and a young smuggler named Mills, you removed Sir Matthew from his coffin, and placed there in its stead a corpse which they had procured from an hospital—how, then, Sir Matthew, still insensible, was conveyed on board the smuggling vessel of Mills, which was then lying off the French coast, and conveyed into Cornwall, while you returned to England with the will you had forged, to take possession of his fortune, and to deliver your own brother, and his daughter Emily, Sir Matthew's favourite niece, to destitution. A fine story this will be for the newspapers of London—will it not? Why, I dare swear, it will serve them as an inexhaustible topic for a week. The ungrateful niece—the false sister—the treacherous aunt. And then, too, the *fashion* in which the villainies of all who were parties to this

black affair were ultimately played off upon each other! How the foolish old woman, Ruth, wedded Gregson; and the young smuggler, Mills, really fell in love with and married her niece, the pretty little girl who was almost a play-mate, rather than an attendant, of Emily Forester, when she lived at Elmwood with Sir Matthew, and was supposed to be the chosen heiress of his wealth."

"Julia, Julia," exclaimed Mrs. Danby, "at what point are you driving, with these detestable and absurd details? What is it that Emily says in that letter?—how has she escaped from Captain Seymour? I heard from him a week ago that he had her in his power, and that he should compel her to become his wife."

"All in good time, my dear aunt!" said Julia, with that ironical calmness, that contrasted as powerfully with her own white and parched lips, and flashing eyes, as with the agonised impatience of Mrs. Danby. "All in good time, my dear aunt. The story is really so pretty and dramatic in its details, that, to my mind, it would, of all things, become a Minor Theatre: the remorse of Cicely Mills, when her husband had lost his ship and was ruined, and the ill usage of the old, iniquitous fool, Ruth, by her husband, would be such points of effect! And then, Mills going to beg of you, and encountering the sweet, charitable Emily; and Gregson, in his profligacy and extravagance, leaving his wife's niece and her husband to starve, and never thinking they would venture to play off upon him the trick which he himself so often threatened to you, and turn traitors. Why, by-the-by, his own wife did, and thus quite ruined you; as she sent that lawyer, Price, and the Earl, on the track of Emily's journey. And, but for her, it is possible that Mills, and a confederate of his among the smugglers, called Black Will, would not have been able to rescue Emily from Captain Seymour."

"Oh, heavens! then she is rescued, and all is discovered!" exclaimed Mrs. Danby. "Oh, what will become of me and my poor girl, my Laura! How will she look the world in the face again!"

"As to the world, aunt," replied Mrs. Warrender, "Laura has defied it so much on her own account, that she need scarce quarrel with it on yours; and let me beg of you not to disturb yourself, when I disclose a secret which Laura, as I understand from Caroline, has hitherto kept from your knowledge. The fact is, Laura was married three weeks ago, to a young man without a shilling, the son of a bankrupt tradesman, whose necessities compelled him, some little time back, even to serve as a waiter at a city hotel."

"What!" shrieked Mrs. Danby; "what is this you tell me? What! Laura married without my consent—married so disgracefully, so infamously! I will never see her again; she may starve or beg, and out of my house she goes to-day."

"Softly, softly, dear aunt," said Julia; "do not suffer yourself to yield imprudently to passion. The world, I can assure you, will have something to say for Laura's husband—it will call him the son of an honest man, who was merely unfortunate, and duped by the old rogue, Josiah Teal; and if he practised a little deceit with Laura, that is excusable in a young man who is in love. It would be well for Laura, aunt, and better for you, if no worse could be said of you than this; or even, if your guilt had ended with your forgeries, and the imprisonment of Sir Matthew, if that imprisonment had not terminated by his death."

"His death!" ejaculated Mrs. Danby. "Oh, Julia, Julia, do not tell me that—do not tell me that the old man is dead! Oh, I never meant his death—no, never! never! Oh, what will become of me; what must I do!"

"Even that which Emily Forester, in her great generosity and forbearance, proposes," answered Julia. "She does not forget that you are her aunt, and wishes to spare you the infamy of a public trial, in which you must be more or less convicted, as an accessory to the guilt of those whose ill usage killed the old man; and therefore Emily, who knows you will not be charged with those crimes till such time as she, with the Earl of Alverston and her other friends, returns to London,

has sent me this letter, in which she advises that, with what ready money and jewels you have at hand, you take refuge in immediate flight."

"And you, too, counsel this, Julia?" said Mrs. Danby, turning upon her niece a countenance so livid, so convulsed with remorse and fear, that it would have moved with compassion any heart, not made hard, as Julia's was, with its own utter selfishness and extreme misery. She, however, had no thought save for herself, and she answered, "Yes, that is my counsel; but you will observe, if I permit you to follow it, I must have my reward. My husband is dead, my father ruined; I do not expect to get married again—there is nothing but a life of wretchedness before me; for from Emily, the *Countess Emily*, I can neither expect aid, nor, were it tendered, would I condescend to receive it. I will go, then, at once, if you will draw the cheque, and fetch what money you have at the banker's. I do not think any intimation has yet been sent to them, which will hinder their paying to your order; at any rate, I will run the risk of their refusal, upon condition, if they give you up the money, that I shall have half the amount, and also an equal division of your jewels. And, as Laura is out for the day—gone, I can tell you, to visit her husband, there will be time for us to arrange everything; and for you to leave England, as, I assure you, you must do, to-night."

"I agree to all this, Julia," said Mrs. Danby, "if you will allow me to divide the money and jewels into thirds. Consider, if my poor Laura has married so imprudently, she must starve, if I do not make for her some provision."

"I cannot help that," returned Julia; "your daughter must take the consequences of her own folly, and your guilt. I must and will have the half of whatever money you may have at command, and, that you may not defraud me, I will present the cheque at the banker's myself."

"I will not do it, then," answered Mrs. Danby, *passionately*; "I will not leave my own child to poverty, as well as disgrace."



or myself perish of want, in a foreign land, to gratify your avarice."

"Then you will please, on the other hand, to be at once given into custody, on the charge of forgery and murder," said Julia, with a coolness of determination that was at once savage and frightful. "I was not unprepared," she added, "for this imprudent obstinacy on your part, and therefore, in the cab which brought me hither, I have an officer waiting; I shall ring, and desire that he may be sent up."

"Oh, no, no, Julia," almost shrieked the miserable woman, as her niece approached the bell-pull; "spare me—have patience, but for a moment, while I fetch the cheque-book; it is in a cabinet in my bed-room."

"Very well," replied Julia, "I will wait here, then," and she resumed her seat, while Mrs. Danby, sobbing hysterically, left the boudoir, between which and her bed-chamber there was a kind of ante-room. As Mrs. Danby proceeded through this ante-room, the noise of carriage wheels, apparently before the door of the mansion, drew Julia's attention, for the windows of the boudoir, near which she sat, overlooked the square; then, as she saw the Earl of Alverston and three other gentlemen descend from the carriage, she was so frightened, so surprised, that she did not notice that her aunt, in entering the bed-room, had locked the door after her; in truth, when that of the boudoir was presently thrown open, and she caught sight of the pale, attenuated old man who leaned upon the arms of the Earl and Mr. Price, she sank speechless in her chair, and with difficulty could preserve herself from fainting. The person, however, at the sight of whom she was so much alarmed, was the first to address her, and little hope or encouragement did she derive from the stern look and tone with which he desired her to summon Mrs. Danby. "The servants told us she was here with you," he said; "and we apprehend, Julia, that you have visited her in consequence of a letter, which our poor weak and too generous Emily owned yesterday that she had sent you. Call your aunt

hither ; tell her she need not fear to come ; I cannot save her from public disgrace, but I will spare her public punishment, at the entreaty of Emily, whose sufferings, from your intrigues and hers, and the contumely with which even honest poverty is always treated by the vile world, have excelled all that I endured during the long imprisonment, from which I was rescued only because the agents of Mrs. Danby had remorse, where she had none."

Julia rose, in obedience to this command, and approached, with a tottering step, the door of the bed-room, which she then found was locked. She called to her aunt, but a sound of hysterical sobbing was her only reply. Finally, the Earl and his companions thought it proper to have the door burst open. Mrs. Danby lay extended, in convulsions, on a couch—at her feet was a phial labelled "Hydrocyanic Acid." She had not lost all consciousness, for, when raised in the arms of some of the servants, who had rushed into the room, she opened her eyes, and fixing them, with a wild glare of recognition, on the countenance of the person who had spoken to Julia, she exclaimed, with a shriek horribly expressive, both of bodily and mental pain, "Oh, Julia, have you deceived me? Is that my uncle, or his ghost? No, it is the real living Sir Matthew! Oh, why did you tell me he was dead—was not the weight of my sin enough? I had no thought of murder—never, never, never!"

Mrs. Danby fell back as she uttered the last words; another, wailing cry, another convulsion, and she lay extended a corpse before the eyes of the old man whose kindness and confidence she had so cruelly betrayed, and against whom she had perpetrated every wrong, save that of actually depriving him of a life, for which she thought she had destroyed every comfort, and every hope.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Thus, even-handed Justice  
Gives back the ingredients of our poisoned chalice  
To our own lips."

MACBETH.

IN a scantily furnished apartment of a mean house, in a suburb of London, two years after the events above related, sits Julia Warrender. Her dress is shabby and faded—her countenance is pale and worn, not only with mental suffering, but the impress of physical want. Streaks of white are thickly mingled with her dark locks, and her eyes, from which the large tears are slowly stealing, have lost their lustre. Sickness, and poverty, and distress of every kind, have pressed hard upon Julia; no wonder that she is so soon and so sadly changed. Her father, totally ruined, has died of a broken heart; the friends of her prosperity have all deserted her; she and her sister have, for the last few months, derived a scanty support from the needle. Very, very severely, have Julia and her sister suffered of late; it is many days since they have enjoyed a really good meal. It would seem, however, that some alleviation of their distress has at last arrived, for, on the little table, near to which Julia sits, lies a purse well filled, and it is gold which shines through the net work. The day is cold, and there is no fire in the grate; it is past four, and Julia has not tasted food since the preceding night; but she does not use that money, either to procure a fire, or a comfortable meal, but still sits there, with her head leaning on her hand, and the bitter tears trickling slowly down her cheeks. Presently, Caroline comes in, looking weary and faint—"You have had no success, then," said her sister, looking up in her woe-begone face.

"None, none!" answered Caroline, bursting into tears. "Oh, what is to become of us? How I would toil, how I would work, if I could get work! Are we never to know comfort again?"

"Perhaps," said Julia, bitterly, taking up the purse, and tossing it into her sister's lap, "you will begin to look for bet-

ter times, since there has been a friend found, so generous as to send us that."

"Fifty sovereigns!" exclaimed Caroline, in a tone of surprise and delight, as she poured out the gold, and counted it over. "Oh, Julia, what angel of goodness has had compassion on our misery?"

"That very sweet and noble angel, the Countess of Alverston, my dear," replied Julia, "who very generously employed that hateful old busy-body, Mrs. Price, to hunt us out, that they might have both the satisfaction of learning all the particulars of our distress, and the boast of relieving it. Oh! I would as soon starve, as be obliged to that Countess."

"I do not agree with you, Julia," said Caroline, quietly, "either as to Emily's motives, or the disposition to starve, rather than be obliged to her. Laura and her husband are living very comfortably, through the assistance the Earl gave them, when Sir Matthew died, and the money they got back from that old rogue, Teal, when he and his son-in-law were ruined. Oh, I have not, for some time past, approved of your hiding yourself and me from Emily; it puts me in mind of the adage, 'that it is useless to cut off the nose, to spite the face.' Emily will not be a jot the worse off, should we choose to refuse her assistance, and starve out of spite, because she had the best luck when we were all on the look out for, and WANTED A HUSBAND."

"Ah," replied Julia, "if you will talk of adages, remember this, which I read one day when I was looking at the Bible, 'that to confer benefits on an enemy, is to heap coals of fire on his head.' I tell you, Caroline, that gold, from Emily Forester, the Countess of Alverston, will blister my fingers—the bread it buys, will choke me. Oh, she indeed has, in this gift, *heaped coals of fire on her enemy's head!*"

THE END.







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